# REPORT RESUMES

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MIRACLE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT--DESEGREGATION IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. SCHOOLS. FREEDOM PAMPHLET SERIES.

BY- HANSEN, CARL F.

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THE BULK OF THIS PAMPHLET IS A RECOUNTING OF THE HISTORY OF THE DESEGREGATION OF THE WASHINGTON, D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS. MANY ANECDOTES ILLUSTRATE THE PROCESS OF COMMUNITY ADJUSTMENT. SPECIAL ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO DISCIPLINE, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, ATHLETICS, AND INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE INTEGRATED SCHOOLS. THE MOST COMMON FEAR OF PARENTS WAS THAT INTEGRATION WOULD LOWER EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ALL CHILDREN. WHEN 1955 CITYWIDE ACHIEVEMENT TESTS WERE CONSIDERABLY BELOW NATIONAL STANDARDS, ORGANIZED COMMUNITY PARENTS DECIDED TO WORK ON THE PROBLEM BY DEMANDING BETTER FISCAL SUPPORT FOR MORE TEACHERS TO REDUCE CLASS SIZE AND TO SET UP SPECIAL CLASSES FOR THE RETARDED. AT THE TIME OF THE PUBLICATION OF THIS PAMPHLET, A BROAD SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM HAD BEEN DEVELOPED, AND ALREADY COMPLETED CURRICULUM REORGANIZATION HAD RESULTED IN INCREASED HOMOGENEOUS GROUPING AT ALL LEVELS. A SKILLS PROGRAM HAD BEEN RE-EMPHASIZED AND PROMOTIONAL PRACTICES HAD BEEN RE-EXAMINED. EMPHASIS ON SUBJECT MATTER STANDARDS HAD INCREASED. SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR THE ATYPICAL SLOW LEARNER AND THE EDUCATIONALLY AND EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED WAS BEING STRESSED, AND PLANS WERE BEING MADE TO REDUCE CLASS SIZE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND TO INITIATE AN EXTENSIVE BUILDING PROGRAM. (AF)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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# MIRACLE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT:

## Desegregation In The Washington, D. C. Schools

by

CARL F. HANSEN

UD002038

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch
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**Freedom** is more than a word. It is a deeply cherished belief in the essential importance of the person and in the supremacy of a society which respects and safeguards the eminent dignity and integrity of personality.

**Freedom** is a creative spirit that summons the energies of all men to the task of building the kind of community, the kind of nation, the kind of world in which they want to live. It is a dream of a world in which all men, women, and children are encouraged to grow to their fullest—physically, mentally, spiritually—so that they may fulfill the great promise of their inner potential.

But freedom is more than a belief or a dream. Freedom is also a process; as such it is concerned with means as with ends, seeking through democratic methods to create the good society.

The education of free men to understand their proper role in a free society is basic to such a process. To this task the ***FREEDOM PAMPHLET*** Series is dedicated.

# MIRACLE
# OF SOCIAL
# ADJUSTMENT:

## Desegregation
## In The
## Washington, D. C.
## Schools

by

**CARL F. HANSEN**

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

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He received A.B. and M.A. degrees from the University of Nebraska, and a doctorate in education with a minor in comparative literature from the University of Southern California.

His community activities include membership on the boards of Children's House, United Cerebral Palsy of Washington, D. C., and the D. C. Society for Crippled Children. He is chairman of the Education Committee of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in the District of Columbia and an Elder of the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The "miracle of social adjustment" described in this booklet is of course, a "man-made miracle." This report is the exposition of events that end on a positive note of affirmation because our fellow citizens acted with good-will and brotherhood. Mankind is so rarely motivated in this blessed manner that instances of it must indeed be termed a "miracle."

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# PREFACE

*Mr. Williams: Do you think, Mr. Hansen, that integration in the District of Columbia Schools has been carried on smoothly and without incident?*

*Dr. Hansen: It would be fantastic to say "without incident." I think that the integration program in this city has been a miracle of social adjustment.*

This was the answer received on September 27th, 1956, by Congressman John Bell Williams of Mississippi, a member of a House of Representatives subcommittee holding hearings on public school conditions in Washington, D. C. The subcommittee was established by the House Committee on the District of Columbia, to investigate public school standards and conditions, and juvenile delinquency in the District.

The question asked for an opinion. The answer was an expression of opinion, a subjective judgment that was derived from participation and observation and was related to attitude as well as to reason. It was not an impromptu or superficial response, even though given in the fast moving question-and-answer atmosphere of the hearings.

"A miracle of social adjustment" — this is an evaluation of what is happening to people activating and being activated by the social change we label integration. It should be spoken of as on-going, as a process toward that kind of human behavior which grows out of the Biblical injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Clearly a judgment of this kind ought to be supportable by substantial amounts of objective evidence as well as by an accumulation of data from which conclusions can be drawn. This unprecedented social adjustment will be described by anecdotal reports, and by reviewing in some detail from first-hand knowledge the preparation and planning for integration and the effects of the process to date.

Records in this instance will be of little value unless accompanied by interpretations, though these will be personal and individual and in no sense official. What is selected for reporting here will relate to the general thesis that a miracle of a kind has taken place in the nation's capital, although adverse episodes and disruptive experiences may seem superficially to support a contrary view.

Society, which is an entity that exists only in man's mind, does not make adjustments, but people do. It is wisest, therefore, to consider people in action or reaction in schools at first segregated and later integrated. Because adjustive behavior is best understood in its context, it will be necessary to tell about practices, policies, and conditions that existed at the time of change. It will be evident that when adjustive processes took place, they affected to varying degrees the making of policy and the management of school affairs within those policies.

And finally, a before-and-after view will demonstrate with startling effect just how different relations between people are now, what changes in attitudes and practices have occurred or have failed to occur because of integration, as well as to what extent changing attitudes hastened the advent of integration here.

The presentation of evidence tending to support the view that a miracle of social adjustment has taken place in Washington is a selective process. It is important to let it be known that these choices and the interpretation of their meanings are being made in the light of the following two deeply-felt convictions about people and their relationships, and the purposes of education:

1. No child should be denied admittance to a school or to any group within that school because of his race.
2. No person should be given any special advantage or disadvantage as to grading, placement, appointment or promotion because of race.

This will be in some measure the story of an educator whose statesmanship directed a school system through its most trying hours. The preparation and planning, and the successful carrying out of these plans in connection with the changeover to an integrated system of schools are the product of the leadership of Superintendent of Schools Hobart M. Corning. But, behind the man and the idea is a staff of professional teachers and principals who put plans into action with strength, courage, and unshakeable determination, exemplifying the best in the teaching profession despite, in many instances, a personal leaning to the contrary. Students and their parents, civic and citizens organizations almost uniformly supported orderly processes of change, sometimes despite their personal opposition to it.

Finally, this will be the story of a Board of Education that, though often divided on policy as is to be expected of a representative governing body, courageously and decisively ordered a prompt end to segregation. It left no room for doubt as to its objective in this resolution for action, and has subsequently withstood all efforts to get it to change its position.

Anyone who views the Washington story in its entirety, including the problems, disappointments, and errors in judgment, will be impressed with the evidence of the integrity of most of the people on it. They will feel a glow of pride that in the nation's capital the ideal of individual dignity and worth, no longer simply an idle phrase in a textbook on American democracy, is now to a much larger extent a living reality in the lives of its citizens.

## CHAPTER I

# WASHINGTON: PROGRESS TOWARD MATURITY

Like people, cities may make progress toward maturity. They develop responsibilities, acquire poise in the presence of new and unexpected crises, exercise judgment in the evaluation and acceptance of new ideas and attain maturity as they move toward the solution of problems. They determine their actions in the light of principle rather than expediency. Their spokesmen dignify policy and practices with leadership that governs the passions and prejudices of the citizens. While moving toward maturity in thought and action, they often find their goals to be receding ones, in that today's actions often fall short of the demands of today's problems.

Faith in the competence of the human mind and heart to surmount all difficulties overcomes doubt and forms a primary resource of mature people in times of stress.

In brief, this is Washington responding to a combination of internal and external forces that have affected and changed the character of the city in the last half-century. Inventions and discoveries, industrial and economic expansion, two global wars, one major localized conflict and an extensive continuing struggle to preserve the free world against the encroachments of tyranny have enforced maturity, and have transfused into its environs the fresh vitality equal to its new responsibilities.

Many Washingtonians have seen cherished beliefs snuffed out in the slipstream of progress. Five years ago one of the city's most respected educators told me, "This is a Southern city. The people here will never accept a change in the status of the Negro."

Although the evidence of change was visible everywhere, many held tenaciously to this view. They believed that somehow what they considered to be the good way of life would be preserved in spite of the demands of democracy.

Progress has a way of hurting those who are unwilling to adjust to it. Sympathy for the persons involved in these painful conflicts should not prevent the changes necessary for the common good.

* * *

She was the principal of a small elementary school a decade ago. The building was an old one. The dull red of its aging brick, the squat, stolid lines of its architecture, the blending of this ancient structure with the decaying row houses among which it sat attested to the fact of community deterioration.

After I had visited classes with her one morning, we discussed conditions in her community and raised questions about the future of the school.

With more sadness than bitterness, she said, "Outsiders are taking over this city. They are changing my school. The situation is very discouraging."

* * *

A young father angrily denounced as unfair a decision that his underage child could not be admitted to kindergarten.

"Foreigners come into this city and get anything they want. I was born in Washington; my father and mother were born in Washington. We pay big taxes here. Foreigners get everything. We get nothing."

When I asked, "Who are these foreigners you speak of?" The young man's answer was, "The people moving into Washington."

"I'm going to move into Maryland," he added.

"Do you not expect to be considered a foreigner there?" I asked.

* * *

Change is inexorable. It overrides old concepts and idealized views of past ways that could never have been as delightful as they seem at the moment of their passing. In Washington, change has taken place on such a broad scale, both as to ideas and number of people involved, that even those who are hurt by it have generally recognized its inevitability.

School desegregation, therefore, took place in a city quite different from the Washington remembered by those who think of it as a Southern community. Desegregation occurred in a city of considerable social and political maturity, a city well experienced in meeting crises, a city grown accustomed to the confusions and pressures of conflict on an international scale and not to be thrown off balance by problems of internal management.

The provincialism of some of its people, though still struggling for survival like underbrush in a forest of tall oaks, no longer disconcerts a Washington made muscle-hard by experience and responsibility.

## Population: Growth and Change

The city of Washington grew. Men came to this place from farm and village and city, from laboratories and legislative halls, from shops and stores. Some came with broad interests, insights and experiences. Others came impoverished and in search of more than they had. All the races, most of the known creeds and nationalities and people of vastly differing social levels make up the population of Washington. They are the citizens named in statistics.

Geographically, expansion is limited to the fixed boundaries established for the District of Columbia by the Congress of the United States. For many years the city's population has been spilling over into Maryland and Virginia. In the last sixteen years, the District of Columbia and its environs have made spectacular gains in population.

The population figures for the metropolitan area for the past 16 years show the extent of growth: 1940 — 967,985; 1950 — 1,464,089; estimated, 1956 — 1,884,000.

The District of Columbia itself has grown rapidly: 1930 — 486,869; 1940 — 663,091; 1950 — 802,178. From 1930 to 1950 the population within the District of Columbia increased by 315,309, a gain of nearly 65 per cent. While there are no studies available to show the extent of population displacement represented by this gain, it may be assumed that the number of new residents in the District of Columbia is much larger than the total of net gain in population.

The city grew in numbers, and as this happened, changes in outlook, customs, and relationships took place. In a special school for foreign-born citizens as many as 72 different nationalities were enrolled during a semester. Included even before desegregation were people of all races. The small, refined, comfortable little city — as it appeared to have been in the minds of its older families — no longer existed. It had rapidly become a robust, vigorous, dynamic American city crowded with people searching for living space for themselves and their aspirations.

Of particular pertinence to ratios of desegregation is the factor of white-Negro population. In 1930, Negroes constituted slightly more than 27 per cent of the total population of the District of Columbia. The census report for that year shows the breakdown of figures to be as follows: white, 354,801; Negro, 132,068; total, 486,869.

Twenty years later, the ratio of Negro to white was notably higher. Of a total population of 802,178 in 1950, nearly 34 per cent were Negro. The report for that year showed the population of the District of Columbia to be as follows: white, 521,375; Negro, 280,803; total, 802,178.

In the last two decades the rate of increase for the Negro was higher than that for the white population. From 1930 to 1950, the Negro population increased by 113 per cent, while the white population increased by 47 per cent. During this twenty-year interval, the local white population increased 166,574, while the Negro population increased 148,735.

In the period from 1940-1950, the white population increased by 45,550, or about 10 per cent, while the Negro population gained 93,537, or nearly 50 per cent.

The question is often asked: Why has the Negro population here increased at a faster rate than the white population? The belief is widespread that school policy during recent years has been largely responsible.

In the spring of 1953, an elementary school principal and I chatted for a moment in her office about population trends in the neighborhood of her school. We had just completed the paper work necessary to the transfer of an elementary school from white to Negro use. Fresh in our minds was the evidence of a changing population in that area, that is to say, the rapid replacement of white families by Negro families, as well as an increase in the number of school-age children that accompanied this transition. In the school to be reassigned the enrollment had fallen to less than half the capacity of the building. The remaining white children were to be transferred to the nearest white schools to relieve overcrowded Negro schools.

In spite of the clear evidence of justification for this action, the principal of the school declared bluntly that she believed that this action would change the population characteristics of the neighborhood served by the school. "Changes in the use of school buildings encourage the inmigration of Negro families. It drives the white families out," she said.

This view of cause and effect was widely held by many citizens of the community who saw for-sale signs sprout up around them as their neighbors prepared to move to the suburbs.

Factors much more powerful in their effect than local school policies seem, however, to be responsible for the movement of Negro population to this and other urban centers. What these factors are will be discovered only through exhaustive social and political research. The answer is much broader than the local reason summarized as, "Blame the schools." This is indicated in an examination of population trends in other major cities where school segregation by race was not practiced.

In Los Angeles, for example, the Negro population grew from 38,894 in 1930 to 171,209 in 1950, an increase of 340 per cent, although during that time the white population grew from 1,199,154 to 1,799,149, a gain of only 50 per cent. During the same two decades Chicago's Negro population more than doubled while its white population fell off slightly. In Detroit as well, the Negro population increased by nearly 150 per cent when the white population increased by less than 10 per cent.

The forces and influences that contributed to an increase of 113 per cent in the Negro population of the District of Columbia from 1930 to 1950 are in all likelihood similar to those responsible for an increase of 340 per cent in Los Angeles, 110 per cent in Chicago, and 150 per cent in Detroit. The motivations for this phenomenal population shift may include a hope for better schools. The primary causes, however, are undoubtedly economic and seem to be common to the major cities affected. It would seem that the District of Columbia Public Schools, as they adjusted to population increases both before and after desegregation, were acting in response to new conditions rather than creating them, and in so doing were observing the customary practice in public education of following rather than initiating social change.

### POPULATION CHANGES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DETROIT, CHICAGO AND LOS ANGELES FROM 1930 TO 1950 INCLUSIVE

| | | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | Per cent of Increase from 1930 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Los Angeles | W | 1,199,154 | 1,440,503 | 1,799,149 | 50 |
| | N | 38,894 | 63,774 | 171,209 | 340 |
| | T | 1,238,048 | 1,504,277 | 1,970,358 | 59 |
| Chicago | W | 3,142,535 | 3,119,077 | 3,128,697 | — 4 |
| | N | 233,903 | 277,731 | 492,265 | 110 |
| | T | 3,376,438 | 3,396,808 | 3,620,962 | 7 |
| Detroit | W | 1,448,596 | 1,474,333 | 1,549,062 | 7 |
| | N | 120,066 | 149,119 | 300,506 | 150 |
| | T | 1,568,662 | 1,623,452 | 1,849,568 | 18 |
| District of Columbia | W | 354,801 | 475,825 | 521,375 | 47 |
| | N | 132,068 | 187,266 | 280,803 | 113 |
| | T | 486,869 | 663,091 | 802,178 | 65 |

1. *W* here means white and all others not listed as Negro.

Approved for publication
Bureau of the Census

## Ideas: Impact and Inertia

A rule of nature states that growth is pressure and counter-pressure.

So, in social growth, the rule is that changes encounter inertias, pressures invite counter-pressures, until the life force of change conquers, or is modified, or subsides.

As a form of social growth, population flow into a city requires adjustments as schools become crowded and as established home owners resist or retreat into the suburbs. The motivations for this in- and out-migration are about the same for all people: a desire for improvement of living conditions, the quest for better job opportunities, the hope for better educational opportunities for children.

New ideas come into the city with its new and changing population. The new concepts and mores which govern the behavior of the newcomers impinge upon the prevailing customs, eliciting manifestations of the pressure and counterpressures of growth.

A fair question is: What are the ideas that have effected changes in social practices? Are they new in American doctrine? What gives them special significance?

The following five ideas seem to add up to a proper answer to the foregoing questions:

1. Survival requires the cooperation of all the peoples of the free world on an equal political and social level. Assumption of superiority of race can no longer be supported in this new interrelationship. Cooperation must be earned; it cannot be forced.
2. Experience on a global scale is validating the idea that people everywhere are more alike than different, despite distinctions in race, customs or religion.
3. Persecution and discrimination for race or creed anywhere are a threat to freedom in the United States.
4. The maximum development of our manpower potential is imperative for national defense. Failure to use our human resources to the full because of race or creed or any other external consideration is not only a denial of personal dignity, but is costly in terms of human welfare.
5. The Judaeo-Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man under one God is no longer simply an inscription on the facade of our cultural heritage. Its influence upon human behavior is being felt with increasing benefit everywhere.

The impact of such ideas is nowhere so dramatic as upon a system of schools organized along strictly enforced segregationist lines, as were the District of Columbia schools prior to 1954. Any system of public schools that operates at cross-purposes with the main stream of American thought and action will inevitably be severely buffeted until it changes direction.

In February, 1939, the District of Columbia Board of Education, with only one dissenting vote, sustained the action of the former superintendent of schools in denying to a Negro singer, Marian Anderson, the use of the auditorium in a white senior high school.

The superintendent told the Board of Education that he believed "The presentation of a program, a musical program, by a group of colored people at the Central High School was not consistent with the legislation which sets up the dual school system, and which was not consistent with the rules of the Board. . . ." The superintendent stated further that he did not believe that it was consistent with existing legislation to start the use of buildings in one division of the school system by people of another division of the school system.

These notes from the minutes of the meeting of the District of Columbia Board of Education on February 15, 1939, show clearly how inflexible was the intepretation of duality in the schools here, and how determined was the stance against a break-through of any kind.

But on this position, the superintendent and Board of Education received less than complete community support. Citizens and organizations of both races extensively protested the action of the Board of Education in sustaining the superintendent in an administrative decision based upon what he considered to be adequate precedent. The rising tide of protest resulted in a concession by the Board of Education at its meeting on March 3, 1939, granting the use of the auditorium provided that "it will not be taken as a precedent and that the Board of Education will not in the future again be asked to depart from the principle of a dual system of schools and school facilities." The conditions of the grant were not acceptable to the sponsoring group, and Marian Anderson sang instead on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

The Marian Anderson episode illustrated the effect of the impact of new ideas upon a school system that could not fully respond to the imperative of change until fifteen years later. It demonstrated as well the extreme duality, separateness and isolation which before desegregation existed between the white and Negro systems of schools though they functioned under one superintendent and one Board of Education.

The prevailing practice in 1939 was a rigid enforcement of the principle of separateness as to the use of buildings housing school children of the white and Negro races. The Board of Education at first sustained the decision of the school administration not to permit a Negro singer to use a "white" high school auditorium after school hours for an "open" audience until public opinion forced a token adjustment in this position. This episode was the forerunner of increasingly intensive attacks upon school segregation as a subversion of American democratic practice.

Eleven years later in September, 1950, the so-called Anacostia High School incident demonstrated again the extent to which the local school system felt compelled to observe the strict duality believed to be imposed upon it by custom and law. Its action in this case triggered a violent and articulate public reaction against separatist doctrines and practices. Shaken by public controversy over the action of the responsible administrators and the Board of Education, the school system became the target of anti-segregation activity locally and across the country. The incident dramatized the impact of new ideas against the inertia of a political unit that could not then legally respond to changing conditions.

As a part of its observance of the Washington Sesquicentennial, the National Capital Sesquicentennial Commission prepared for public presentation an original historical and patriotic drama entitled, "Faith of Our Fathers." To promote interest among high school students, the cast was authorized to appear before high school assemblies to present excerpts from the dramatization.

When the members of the cast came to Anacostia High School on September 19, 1950, to present the program, the principal of the school discovered that Negroes were included and were scheduled to appear in the performance for the students. Thereupon, she and her immediate superior "agreed that it would be unwise to permit the assembly with the mixed cast." She was authorized to cancel the performance unless arrangements satisfactory to her could be made. Since this could not be done, the program was abandoned.

The principal reported that she "noted groups of students discussing the presence of colored persons in the building and showing signs of displeasure." Previous to this occasion, she had notified her superior "that in view of the situation in the Anacostia area due to the swimming pool situation during the last summer and to the bus difficulties a year before," she thought it unwise to have a mixed group perform on her stage.

The swimming pool situation mentioned here involved disorder that resulted when the Interior Department opened the Anacostia pool to all races. Although the pool was closed for a time, it was later reopened on a non-segregated basis and continues to remain so.

On October 18, 1950, the Board of Education sustained the school administration in its cancellation of excerpts from "Faith of Our Fathers" by approving in a five to three vote its special committee report which read in part as follows: "That this special committee, being bound by law, recommends that the Board obey the law in its specific instructions and in its spirit."

The Marian Anderson and the Anacostia High School incidents occurred because traditional practices were being questioned by those who viewed them as out-of-date and inconsistent with the principles for which America stands. Although as late as 1950 the new ideas burgeoning within this city had not shattered the encrustations of the past so far as the schools were concerned, the forces at work were relentless and bound sooner or later to achieve a break-through.

## Action: Civic Agencies Attack Racial Bars

In the decline of racial discrimination in the nation's capital, the effect of attitudes and thoughts upon social customs is well illustrated.

In the history of this movement will be observed some degree of the lag between thinking and doing that always accompanies social action.

To some extent the speed with which the nation's capital has acted upon newly vitalized principles of human relations is clearly attributable to emergency conditions both on the national and world-wide level. It is reported, for example, that Negroes fared better in the Federal service during World War II than before. In our position as a leader of the free world, racial discrimination has become an embarrassing contradiction of what we stand for as a nation and hence its elimination has acquired some degree of urgency.

From 1933 to the time of the Supreme Court decision on school segregation, action against racial discrimination in the District of Columbia has been intensive. Most of the important developments in the desegregation story are described in a report prepared in 1954 by the staff of the District of Columbia Recreation Board. Highlights from this report as it appeared in the *Washington Daily News* for July 14, 1945 are included in the following chronicle of these events:

1933 — Negroes were admitted to Federal picnic areas, golf courses, tennis courts, baseball diamonds.

1941 — President Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Committee as a war measure.

1943 — The DAR invited Marian Anderson to open war relief concerts in Constitution Hall.

1944 — The YWCA opened its food service departments to all races.

1946 — The American Institute of Architects, Metropolitan Chapter, admitted the first Negro member.

1948—President Truman ordered Federal appointments to be made on merit only. Restrictive home covenants were declared unenforceable by the United States Supreme Court. The Dupont Motion Picture Theatre pioneered in the admission of integrated audiences. The National Theatre was boycotted by the Actor's Equity Association because it wouldn't admit Negroes. The Gayety Theatre (now the Schubert) began to admit unsegregated audiences. The Washington Archdiocese opened its schools on a desegregated basis.

1949 — The District Recreation Board permitted a demonstration of interracial use of two playgrounds, adopted a "gradual" program for playground integration, opened 18 areas to both races, authorized some interracial use of schools. (The Recreation Board by law is authorized to use school buildings for its program after school hours.) The Board of Education "accepted" such interracial use of its buildings upon the premise that control for recreational purposes was in the hands of the Recreation Board.

1950 — The indoor swimming pool at Cardozo High School recreation center was desegregated by the Recreation Department. The Arena Stage ended segregation.

1951 — Negroes were admitted to membership in the District Nurses Association.

1952 — The Recreation Board discontinued the employment of white and Negro assistant superintendents and organized one such office to serve the entire department. The National Theatre, after a period as a motion picture house, reopened as a legitimate theatre admitting unsegregated audiences.

During the 1952 election campaign, the two major parties promised to end segregation in the District of Columbia. President Dwight D. Eisenhower said in a 1952 election campaign speech: "Segregation in the nation's capital must be abolished."

District Medical and Optometric Societies admitted Negro doctors. Major hotels admitted Negro guests to mixed conventions and dinners. Fifty-four eating places, the five-and-ten-cent stores, and some department stores accepted Negro diners.

1953 — The District Recreation Department opened its first desegregated swimming pool, merged white and Negro divisions, and conducted an interracial training program. The District Health Physical Education and Recreation Association admitted Negro members. The white and Negro Teachers Unions merged.

On November 10, Parent-Teachers' Associations of four white elementary schools held their third annual joint open meeting on the question: "Is our community ready for integration?" Parent groups were now tackling an issue that a year ago would have been taboo. The assumption continued to grow: Integration is bound to come. We need to prepare now for the changes it will make.

On November 25, was issued the policy order of the District of Columbia Government regarding non-discrimination. Although the schools were not included because of contrary statutes, the official pronouncement by the District of Columbia Commissioners against discriminatory practices was a green light to move ahead in preparation for eventual integration if and when prohibitive statutes were invalidated by court action.

Some aspects of the policy order issued by the District of Columbia Board of Commissioners are discernible in a similar policy statement that would be issued by the Board of Education less than a year later. As quoted below in part, this order manifests a high level of public responsibility:

> WHEREAS, the public policy of the United States requires that all citizens shall have equality of opportunity with respect to employment in the government and the use of government facilities and services without regard to their race, religion, color, ancestry or national origin; and
>
> WHEREAS, adherence to these principles by the Government of the Dis-

trict of Columbia is of particular importance because the District of Columbia is the Capital of our Nation, and a symbol of democracy in the eyes of the world; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioners believe that adherence to these principles will increase the efficiency of the Government of the District of Columbia by helping achieve the maximum utilization of its facilities and of the abilities of its personnel, and will promote cooperation and harmony in the affairs of the Government of the District of Columbia.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby ordered that:

I. *Nondiscrimination in Employment:*

(a) *Policy.* Every official and employee under the supervision of the District Commissioners in any department, agency, or instrumentality, or any of its constituent units subject to this order shall base all personnel actions taken or ordered by him, solely on merit and fitness of the individual without regard to race, religion, color, ancestry or national origin.

II. *Nondiscrimination in use of facilities and services:*

(a) *Policy.* Every official and employee under the supervision of the District Commissioners in any department, agency, or instrumentality, or any of its constituent units subject to this order shall act without regard to race, religion, color, ancestry, or national origin in all matters relating to the use and enjoyment of, or assignment or entitlement to any public facility, accommodation, service, or treatment subject to his control, authority, or supervision unless specifically required by statute to do otherwise.

Early in 1953 in his State of the Union Address to Congress, President Eisenhower declared, "I propose to use whatever authority exists in the office of the President to end segregation in the District of Columbia. . . ."

1954 — Downtown movie houses sold tickets to all patrons without regard to race. The Board of Education conducted an in-service training program on race relations for all administrators and teachers.

The day after the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional, the District Recreation Board desegregated all public recreation under its control.

## Outcome: School Desegregation A Logical Next Step

Although many problems in race relations remain to be solved and discrimination along racial lines continues in various forms, the extent of the movement to alleviate these problems was so great as to have left the schools an island in a sea of change.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court announced its decisions declaring separation by race in public schools to be contrary to the intent of the Constitution of the United States.

On May 24, 1954, the Board of Education of the District of Columbia adopted an anti-segregation policy with instructions to the

Superintendent of Schools to implement it for the opening of school in September, 1954.

Even without Supreme Court sanctions, the local schools would have been obliged to find ways to end school segregation within the reasonable future. As a public agency, the schools could hardly have resisted the local and national attacks upon racial discrimination in the nation's capital. At about the time of the Supreme Court decision, the attack upon racial segregation on all fronts had reached a climactic crescendo in this city, and the conditions for action by the Board of Education were almost at the flood. The action of the Board to desegregate at once may be described as an historical inevitability.

## THE WASHINGTON FEDERATION OF CHURCHES ON THE SUBJECT OF INTEGRATION

*Date Line: 1953 February 19*
*From a letter to Dr. Hobart M. Corning,*
*Superintendent of Schools*

*"We feel that the churches in some respects have demonstrated that integration is possible without creating the tensions which people usually fear. We have had experience in the areas of day camps, vacation church schools, city-wide youth groups and in teacher training. Each year we have approximately 1,500 teachers in training for a six-week period completely on an interracial basis."*

## WILLING AND ABLE TO ACCEPT

*Date line: 1953 March 11*
*From a principal*

*"I am happy to report to you that, following several individual discussions and one group discussion concerning the possibility of an integrated school system, our faculty seems willing and able to adapt to it with good professional spirit."*

## CHAPTER II

# THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A SOCIAL ORGANISM IN ADJUSTMENT

The Board of Education of the District of Columbia, consisting of nine members appointed by the judges of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, derives its authority from, and is governed by the Congress of the United States.

The Congress of the United States stands in about the same relationship to the District of Columbia Board of Education as do the legislatures of the individual states to local boards of education. Acting in this capacity the Congress required the appointment of an assistant superintendent of schools who was to have sole responsibility for the system of Negro schools and who in turn was directly responsible to the Superintendent of Schools. Sec. 3 of the Organic Law of 1906 contains this stipulation.

The Organic Law of 1906 also provided for separate Boards of Examiners for the selection of white and Negro teachers. Thus the dual system was developed by means of legislation that spelled out the principles of administrative organization which provided a system of Negro schools under the direction of a Negro assistant superintendent. It required the appointment of Negro and white teachers by separate Boards of Examiners, of which the superintendent was chairman.

The District Board of Education is fiscally dependent upon (1) the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia and (2) the Congress of the United States, which appropriates money for the operation of the schools.

Briefly, all requests for money originated by the Superintendent of Schools must, after approval by the Board of Education, be approved by the Commissioners of the District, by the proper committees of both houses of Congress, by the Congress itself and by the President of the United States.

The people of the District of Columbia support their schools through the payment of taxes, chiefly levied on property, income, and sales. Except for the funds obtained for vocational education through appropriations available to the several states as well, no Federal funds are directly appropriated for the operation of the local public schools. A Federal contribution for "services" is made to the city, however. In 1956 this amounted to 12.56 per cent of the total appropriation for all city departments.

The chief executive officer of the District Board of Education is the Superintendent of Schools. Under the authority delegated to him, he is responsible for the management of a school system that until September of 1954 consisted of two main branches coordinated at the top, but generally operating as two separate entities below the superintendent's level.

In statistical language, the District school system looked like this in 1954, the year of transition:

*People:* It consisted of 5261 employees of which 3986 were teachers and officers, a Board of Education serving 105,473 students, — 64,080 Negro, 41,393 white and others — in a community of 802,178 citizens as part of a metropolitan population of 1,884,000.

*Things:* It consisted of 167 buildings used for educational purposes as follows: Two colleges, twelve high schools, five vocational high schools using seven buildings, 21 junior high schools, 125 elementary schools. Add to this seven buildings used exclusively for administrative purposes, a storehouse, two warehouses, five sites held for future construction and a maintenance shop.

*Money:* In 1954 the appropriation for school purposes was $28,336,400.

*Program:* Instruction ranged in level from that planned for noneducable but trainable children to courses at the graduate level leading to the Master's degree in the Teachers College. Teaching was provided for students in classrooms, in shops, in homes, in the Library of Congress for Capitol and Supreme Court pages, in hospitals for mentally disturbed or physically incapacitated children.

In broad outline, this was the District of Columbia public school system at the time of desegregation. It was then and continues to be a functioning social organism, its manifold parts interrelated by a common purpose, the education of those who come to its doors. As a social agency, that is, one primarily concerned with people and whose product is modification of human behavior, the school system was peculiarly sensitive to changes in social climate. It felt the effects of sudden population change, with resultant over-crowding and parental dissatisfaction; of the conflict between educational ideologies, particularly between those who favored a liberal arts orientation and those who looked upon education solely as an adjustment to life. The school system was affected by the argument about phonics or the lack of it in the teaching of reading; by the demands made upon it to broaden its curriculum to include more about nuclear fission, civil defense, consumer credit, health, sex, safety, automobile driving, aviation, child care, music, military science and tactics. Name anything that has especially preoccupied the people of this country during the last two decades and it is likely to be found as an item of controversy somewhere in the annals of the District public schools.

Add to the foregoing catalog of educational problems, the most controversial of them all, the operation of a segregated school system under the constantly increasing attack of those who opposed that system. This conflict was followed by the change to an integrated system with continuing controversy and attack by those who still object to the change and the way it was made.

The ability of public education here to survive such battering as it has been subjected to in recent years can be interpreted only as proof of public confidence in the principle of public education and of the courage and competence of its teachers, administrators, and Board of Education. There is a body of evidence proving that the local schools, though storm-centered, have refused to become storm-cellared and are gaining strength under stress. Illustrations: the increase in facilities for remedial work, the start toward reduction in class sizes, the increase in special services.

## People, Policies, and Purse Strings

Keep in mind that the Washington school system, while subject to all the ills it would normally have been heir to, was also confronted with the appallingly difficult task of operating under a segregated school system at a time when conditions made this extremely difficult.

*People:* With reference to number, location and race, the population factor created many of the most perplexing problems that confronted the District public schools in the last decade.

Pupil membership in 1945 was 88,502 with 44 per cent Negro. In 1953 it was 103,833, up about 18 per cent with 56 per cent Negro.

Along with an increase of 15,331 pupils came a shift in population from central to peripheral areas, reducing enrollments where the schools were and building them up where they weren't.

Up to 1953, school construction was consistently behind the need, because a backlog of need existed from the war period when capital construction was negligible since adequate money for school construction was hard to get under the prevailing fiscal policy. In addition, the buildings that were available could not be used by Negro and white pupils together. During this decade the schools were often confronted with the embarrassment of unused school space in neighborhoods where Negro children were jam-packed into overcrowded classrooms or were on part-time schedules. Sometimes both situations prevailed because part-time schedules are set up *in extremis,* when it is completely impossible to crowd additional pupils into the available space — naturally the cup is always filled to the brim before it overflows.

Because of these conditions, the Board of Education was forced to set up many half-time classes from 1945 to 1953. The peak load of such classes occurred in the second semester of 1946, when 7484 elementary and junior high school pupils, 7150 Negro and 334 white, attended school on half-day schedules. During the entire ten-year period 45,238 pupils spent part of or an entire school year on part-time. Of this number, 36,179 or 79.6 per cent were Negro. It is hardly necessary to point out that many students in the upper grades of the public schools in 1954, that is, at the time of desegregation, have experienced part-time instruction with the attendant loss in educational opportunity.

As the population of a neighborhood shifted from white to Negro, the enrollments in the white schools would decline while those in the Negro schools mushroomed under school segregation. A community in transition was a community in trouble, because when overcrowded schools were adjacent to half-filled schools the only adjustment that could be made was to transfer the white pupils from their school to the nearest white school and assign Negro pupils to the school vacated by the white pupils. Between 1947 and 1954, 20 school buildings were transferred to Negro pupils.

Whenever a change was made, the community served by the school to be transferred was shaken by controversy, racial tensions and animosities. In some instances children on their way home from a half-filled elementary school were taunted by Negro children with expressions like "We're going to get your school."

Board meetings were crowded with parents, some of whom demanded relief from overcrowding while others protested a proposed transfer of "their" school. Sometimes Negro parents objected to schools suggested for transfer because they did not want buildings they believed to be obsolete, run-down and no longer suitable for white children.

Negro parents protested when their children had to travel excessive distances to schools, past white schools that were close to their homes.

Early one morning, I received a call from the principal of a white elementary school, "A colored minister is sitting in the kindergarten with his son. He says he is going to stay there until I enroll his child."

She added in alarm, "A newspaper photographer is already here wanting to take pictures."

The parent ended his "sit-down" demonstration the second day, but he had dramatized the hardship resulting from segregation as well as the problems parents have in explaining to their children why they can't go to the neighborhood school with their playmates.

People are the raw materials of an educational system. They are the reason for its existence; they justify the employment of teachers and the outlay of money for buildings. But if they come into the schools in unexpectedly large numbers, and if the policies and conditions under which the schools operate are not designed to cope with the influx, the situation takes on the characteristics of a crisis — not only because of part-time, but because of overcrowding in the classrooms as well.

In 1948, for example, there were 711 regular elementary classes, 47.7 per cent of a total of 1278, that were 36 or above in size. Seventy per cent of these oversized classes were in Negro schools. Among them were 272 classes for Negro pupils of 41 or above as against only two such classes for white pupils.

The history of this period is one of persistent but often disappointing efforts to reduce class sizes in the Negro schools. That some gains were made is evident in the fact that elementary school ratios of pupils to teachers in the Negro schools ranged from 39.8 (as compared with 34.4 in the white elementary schools) in 1949 to 37.9 (33.4 in the white elementary schools) in 1951, and to 38.2 (34.5 in the white schools) in March of 1953. During these years, the Board of Education standard for regular elementary grades was 36 pupils to one teacher.

In spite of the improvement, however, much more than half of the Negro elementary school children were taught during the years from 1945 to 1953 in classes above 36 in size.

Although some reduction in class size for Negro children was accomplished, the program of special education for these pupils was not developed as rapidly as needed and lagged considerably behind the one utilized for white children. In 1953, only 1.4 per cent of the Negro elementary enrollment was in special classes as compared with 3.0 per cent of the white children. In the junior high schools during the same term, special classes were available for only .3 per cent of the Negro students while 3.8 per cent of the white students enjoyed the benefits of special placement.

The school system sought to keep abreast of the changing population by adjusting educational resources already available, and by asking for appropriations for buildings, teachers, and supplies for Negro pupils. It failed, however, to achieve at any time an overall balance in the assignment of school resources.

Spot checks of the per cent of teaching personnel and building capacity assigned to the use of Negro pupils in 1945, 1950 and 1953 show the lag that persisted despite evident increases in each of these years.

In 1945, the Negro pupils made up 44 per cent of the school population. In that year only 39.1 per cent of the teachers and officers were Negro and 34.9 per cent of the capacity of school buildings was used by Negro students. This was a lag of 4.9 and 9.1 per cent in the two categories.

In 1950, the Negro pupil membership comprised 50.7 per cent of the total, whereas 44.7 per cent of the teachers and 42.7 per cent of the buildings were assigned to Negro pupils. While from 1945, the percentage of teachers increased 5.6 points and the percentage of building capacity increased 7.8 points, the Negro pupil membership increased 6.7 points. It is obvious the school system had made some advance in closing the gap as to buildings, but had lost ground in the effort to equalize on teachers.

In the fall of 1953, the Negro pupils made up 56.8 per cent of the school enrollment. That year Negro teachers comprised 51.1 per cent of the total staff, a lag of 5.7 points. At the same time, 48.6 per cent of building capacity was assigned to colored pupils, a lag of 8.2 points.

The ratios of Negro pupils to facilities available to them indicate that the school system had been unable to achieve a technical equality between numbers of pupils, buildings, and teachers, although it obviously had endeavored to adjust to the changing ratio of Negro and white students.

While the figures reviewed here are impersonal, the superintendent and his Board of Education were confronted month by month with the desperate necessity of finding ways to make the adjustments required — by transfers of salaries and buildings, by insistent requests for more appropriations. Yet they were never ahead of the problem no matter what they did. In Washington, D. C., where equalization was striven for earnestly and vigorously, it was never achieved.

## TABLE IV

## PUPIL MEMBERSHIP, NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND TEACHERS, CAPACITY OF BUILDINGS, AND PER CENT BY RACE FOR 1945, 1950, 1953

| | Oct. 26, 1945 | | Oct. 20, 1950 | | Oct. 23, 1953 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) |
| *Pupil membership* | | | | | | |
| White | 49,536 | 56.0 | 46,736 | 49.3 | 44,897 | 43.2 |
| Negro | 38,966 | 44.0 | 47,980 | 50.7 | 58,936 | 56.8 |
| Total | 88,502 | 100.0 | 94,716 | 100.0 | 103,833 | 100.0 |
| *Officers and teachers* | | | | | | |
| White | 2,073 | 60.9 | 2,019 | 55.3 | 1,854 | 48.9 |
| Negro | 1,331 | 39.1 | 1,633 | 44.7 | 1,941 | 51.1 |
| Total | 3,404 | 100.0 | 3,652 | 100.0 | 3,795 | 100.0 |
| *Capacity of buildings*[a] | | | | | | |
| White | 69,968 | 65.1 | 60,207 | 57.3 | 57,643 | 51.4 |
| Negro | 37,505 | 34.9 | 44,917 | 42.7 | 54,612 | 48.6 |
| Total | 107,473 | 100.0 | 105,124 | 100.0 | 112,255 | 100.0 |

[a] Capacity of elementary classrooms was reduced from 40 to 36 in 1947.

Department of General Research and Statistics
Prepared by
Office of the Statistician
October 16, 1956

*Policies:* There was one policy in the District schools prior to the desegregation program although it had two sides:

Keep Negro and white pupils separate.

Do everything possible to equalize.

The District Board of Education was bound by the law on the subject. Whenever a Negro pupil sought admission to a white school, admission was promptly denied. When a white girl tried to enroll at a Negro vocational school, she was told she was not eligible under the law.

Most of these cases were tests — designed to breach the wall of segregation by proving inequality.

In one case, a junior high school student in an overcrowded school wanted to enroll in one less overcrowded, where part-time instruction was not necessary. At one time, as many as 3135 Negro junior high school students were going to school less than a full day. Less than half of the first graders in the Negro schools had had kindergarten experience, *primia facie* evidence that facilities were inadequate.

Court action on the grounds of inequality in the kindergarten seemed to be fruitless, mainly because the issues raised tended to collapse as the Board of Education corrected the specific conditions complained of or proved the good faith of its intention to do so.

Significantly, members of the Board and the administrative staff rarely, if ever, publicly defended segregation as sound in practice, as moral and desirable in philosophy, as having any virtue or value.

The preservation of the practice was on a negative basis: "It is the law. We can't change it."

When the law no longer supported the policy, which had not been defended as good in and of itself, it is not surprising that the Board of Education took immediate action to change the policy.

*Purse Strings:* Like most large city school systems, the District schools find that money is hard to get for expansion of school facilities and for shaping the curriculum to meet the new demands made upon the schools.

In some respects the schools here are at a disadvantage by being in the Nation's Capital. Far from becoming a model of the finest in public education, they are usually compared with other systems of similar size, when budgets, salaries, class sizes, etc., are under consideration, generally falling at the midpoint between the best and poorest standards.

If at any time the local schools lead the parade in some aspect, curtailment may be requested until the relative advantage is lost.

In daily expenditures per pupil for instruction in 1954-55, the District school system ranked in eighth place in thirteen cities with populations of 500,000 or more. In auxiliary services, it ranked twelfth, in costs of administration it was in sixth place.

The condition results to some extent from the fact that the members of Congress, who appropriate money for the operation of the schools, sometimes feel compelled to relate the standards which they support here to those in their own districts.

A member of Congress spoke of this factor during a discussion of a proposed salary change here nearly ten years ago.

"Salary levels here can't get too much out of line with salaries in my own district," he said. The same limitation is often set in respect to school facilities, class sizes, and special activities when budgets are analyzed. In many ways, then, the Washington, D. C. public schools are affected by the standards, objectives, and points of view of local schools anywhere in the land and seem inevitably to be tied to the midpoint between the better and the less satisfactory conditions.

Budget-wise, the Board of Education, the Commissioners, and Congress were clearly intent upon achieving equality in the number of school buildings.

From 1945 to 1953 inclusive, appropriations for capital construction totalled $29,470,827. The money was allocated as follows: for white pupils, $10,004,610 (34 per cent); for Negro pupils, $19,456,217 (66 per cent).

Yet, the disparity persisted because of the continuing in-migration of Negro students and out-migration of white students. In 1953, for example, the Negro enrollment was 56.8 per cent of the total and the capacity of the buildings assigned to them was 48.6 per cent of the total.

Elimination of part-time and disparity between facilities for white and Negro pupils, plus reduction in class sizes and the establishment of parity in this category were objectives that were obviously difficult to achieve because of the gap between asking and receiving in the District of Columbia.

Population increases and shifts, both as to race and residence, cautious fiscal policies, and the continuous necessity of reassigning schools and teaching salaries from the white to Negro schools involved the District school system in a decade of strenuous adjustment. In the course of these years the people spoke up, articulate, informed, and persistent. It would seem that desperate as the stresses may have been at times, the conditions tended to produce good rather than bad results, chief of which was an alerted citizenry and a growing feeling that segregation sooner or later would disappear.

## An Eventuality Becomes An Actuality

The headline of a feature story on the editorial pages of the *Washington Star* on October 13, 1951 declared. "D. C. Educators Consider an Eventuality." The article was a review of a *Handbook on Intergroup Education* that had been recently completed by a District public schools curriculum committee. The writer asked a pertinent question: "What would happen in the District if one Monday morning the Supreme Court suddenly outlawed segregated school systems?"

"The sudden attempt to integrate might have a more or less tragic outcome," a prominent school staff member and then vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was quoted as having told the author of the article. "Begin now," he said, "to indoctrinate our children with the understanding that races are composed of inferior and superior individuals, and that all peoples should be respected."

The article pointed out that many people believe "that the elimination of segregation as a public policy is inevitable.

"District school officials, recognizing the problem they would have on their hands if the dual school system were abolished suddenly, have embarked on a new project of intergroup education in the public schools."

Whether the article correctly interpreted the motives of school officials in developing a handbook on intercultural education is an open question. No one officially discussed such an objective. In fact, the curriculum guide was planned to be used within the policy of segregation. It was designed to promote better group understanding between races, creeds, and economic and social levels. An important purpose was to give official approval and encouragement to intergroup activity in classroom and school building, and provide guiding principles for such activity, as well as practical suggestions for working intergroup education into the existing curriculum.

Science teachers, for example, were asked to include in their teaching at appropriate places lessons that would point up the fact that there is no proof of racial superiority or inferiority, and that differences within races are greater than the differences between races.

In the handbook, the aim of intergroup education was described as follows: "The aim of intergroup education is to develop a consciousness and appreciation of the dignity, contributions and basic unity of all the ethnic, racial, religious, social and economic groups which enrich the American way of life."

Although this is rather involved phrasing and perhaps difficult to translate into a classroom lesson plan, it is sound American doctrine that strikes at the heart of segregation by race and against discrimination of any kind.

This principle, among others stated in the *Handbook on Intergroup Education*, was approved by the Board of Education, although not until April, 1952, in an action that even then moved the Board policy-wise much beyond the limits set by its actions in the Anacostia case, when a Negro player was not permitted to perform for a high school assembly.

Although the development of the handbook was an important feature of the emotional and philosophical preparation for desegregation, it was perhaps more useful as a measure of progress rather than as a means to it. That is, the events preceding and following the publication of the first draft of the guide in 1951 must be known and interpreted if anything like a well-rounded, detailed picture of preparation for desegregation can be made manifest.

What follows next is a brief guided tour through the history of more or less direct and easily identifiable activities aimed at improving race relations in the District public schools. It will be noted that many were not school initiated — but were motivated by community interest.

1947 February 25 — This is the date of the statement of the Citizens Committee on Intercultural Education addressed to the Superintendent of Public Schools and the Board of Education.

The report stated, "The increase in racial and religious tensions constitutes a serious threat to the national unity of this Republic." The report described plans for intergroup education developed in cities like Detroit, Philadelphia, and Wilmington, Delaware. It recommended that the superintendent appoint an intergroup, interfaith committee composed of teachers, supervisors, and administrators to "study and develop ways in which interracial relations in our public schools might be made more effective, to formulate and recommend to school administrative officials plans for the expansion and improvement of intercultural education in the school system of the District of Columbia."

The Citizens Committee on Intercultural Education in 1947 included, among others, several university professors, two members with labor affiliations, an associate editor of a newspaper, the executive secretary of the Washington Federation of Churches, a former assistant Secretary of State, the chairman of the National Commission for the Defense of Democracy through Education and a parent-teacher leader (Negro) and the special adviser on Negro affairs to the Secretary of Commerce.

The emphasis in the report to the superintendent was preventive, that is, the problem seemed at that time to be mainly one of how to head off further restrictions of minority groups.

1947 February 25 — A report from the public schools of the District of Columbia, dated on exactly the same day as the Citizens Committee report, seems to constitute a partial answer, although it is a statement of the school's purposes and philosophy in respect to human relations. The following excerpts from this important school document testify to the long-term interest in the growth and development of wholesome personalities and suggest what everyone knows, that good education is good human relations:

"The schools of the District of Columbia are sensitive to the need for intercultural education with special emphasis upon the problems involved in racial and religious differences and group differences. The D. C. schools have tried to meet these obligations and to teach appreciation of the minority groups who have contributed to the strength of our nation. Although the law requires racial segregation, the curriculum of the schools has accepted the responsibility for developing in our pupils a sensitivity to other human beings, to their needs and aspirations in spite of racial differences. The curriculum is based upon a philosophy of education which was conceived in a democratic manner with a desire to utilize everybody's contribution. The following quotations from this basic philosophy give an indication of its spirit:

"We believe we should seek to develop in the child a deep-seated sense of service and tolerance, and an increasing awareness of the individual's responsibility to his group and of the group's responsibility to the individual.

"We should hold as the immediate aims for American education equal opportunity for all and progressive development for each according to his needs and capacities.

"We should hold as the ultimate aim an individual . . . who, as a responsible citizen, is ready for the enjoyment and duties of American ideals, principles, and purposes that will promote the progress of our own democracy and carry over into world citizenship."

1947 October 31 — The curriculum department of the District schools asked for nominations for the Committee on Intercultural Education. The committee was to do two things: study existing programs of intercultural education and recommend techniques, methods, and content for improvement of instruction in this area for use in the existing curriculum.

1947 November 25 — In response to the request of the Superintendent of Schools, the Citizens Committee on Intercultural Education submitted its suggestions for a practical program of intercultural education for the District schools. The plan included the appointment of a superintendent's school committee (this had already been started at the request of the superintendent), the institution of pre-service courses in intergroup education at the two teachers' colleges and of in-service programs for all officials and teachers of the public school system; beginning joint extra-curricular activities for all students; improved classroom teaching to develop proper attitudes and appreciation of all races to the progress of civilization. In turn, the Citizens Committee agreed to consider sponsoring workshops and institutes on intercultural education in cooperation with educational and civic groups.

Out of the beginning, came what turned out to be an early and almost prophetic blueprint of the program of preparation for desegregation, which was followed by the public schools and the many groups and organizations concerned with the improvement of human relations.

1949 January 16 — This date was made memorable by the fact that a series of seminars on intercultural education began under the sponsorship of the National Conference of Christians and Jews on school premises and with the support of the Superintendent of Schools. The president of the Board of Education opened the first meeting, giving semi-official approval to the project.

1950 June 19-23 — The first Institute on Human Relations and Intergroup Understanding was sponsored by American University in cooperation with the education committee of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. It was significant as the first of many workshops to be organized by American University, to be followed later with workshops at Catholic University and Howard University. The Superintendent's office and various other officers helped initiate this conference, assisted throughout the planning stages, and participated in the workshop itself.

1950 November 29-30 — The Citizens Committee sponsored a Community Conference on Intercultural Education in Greater Washington. This conference set the pace for other efforts to get the public involved in the improvement of human relations in order to assure a greater base of support for school activity in this field.

1951 June 12 — A draft copy of the *Handbook on Intergroup Education* prepared by the public schools curriculum committee on that subject was forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools.

Upon the request of the superintendent, the draft copy was distributed to school principals. The principals of the white elementary schools overwhelmingly approved the handbook.

## TOGETHER AROUND A PROBLEM

*1951 September 17 — At the invitation of the principal of a white elementary school, the principals of 12 Negro and white elementary and junior high schools met to map out a campaign to reduce vandalism in the area.*

*They carried out an aggressive community-wide campaign that involved many groups and individuals of both races.*

*Results: A reduction in number of windows broken in one school alone from 294 in 1951 to 54 in 1952 and an increase in understanding and appreciation among the people of the community.*

1952 January 14 — The superintendent's circular on the observance of Brotherhood Week sparked much activity in intercultural education and set high standards for human relations in the District of Columbia.

The Superintendent of Schools said: "The observance of Brotherhood Week has special meaning for us here in Washington, where a concerted effort is being made to develop good human relations and to make it possible for every child to develop those talents which he has, regardless of race or creed."

1952 April 16 — The Board of Education approved the *Handbook on Intergroup Education.* Four votes, aye; nay, none. After nearly a year, the handbook became an official school document. It was ready for distribution to teachers as soon as arrangements could be completed for printing.

## TO DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE

*1952 June 10 — Several white elementary pupils were struck by stones a group of Negro boys threw at them during morning recess. Tension between the two races became critical when the community learned that one of the boys might suffer permanent injury to an eye. A background for trouble had been developed because of friction between white and Negro patrol boys during the school year.*

*The principal's efforts to bring the Negro and white parents of the community into a council to work out their difficulties had so far failed. The new PTA president, however, invited a number of Negro and white neighbors into her home, and with this as a start found that by next fall she could get the executive councils of the PTA's of the three schools together for a work session on how to help the children of the neighborhood live together as friends.*

*Later in the fall the safety patrols of the three schools, Negro and white, met in the white school for a joint safety session, had refreshments and fellowship afterward.*

*Principal's comment: "To have the parents of this school accept the challenge to do something constructive, instead of letting the incident incite them with negative emotions of racial discrimination is very encouraging."*

The handbook was less than a perfect document in its treatment of intercultural education, but it was a local creation, produced by school staff members — teachers, principals, supervisors — for use in the District public schools. Counsel was sought from experts and specialists in the field of human relations. Local resources were generous in supplying printed materials and visual aids, but independence in the direction of philosophy and the selection of materials was jealously preserved by the school committee.

1952 October 28 — The Washington Fellowship in cooperation with 15 other organizations held its second session of the Leadership Training Series on Intergroup Relations. Subject: How has integration in the schools taken place in other communities?

1952 December 4-5 — The Citizens Committee held its second Community Conference on Intercultural Education.

1953 March 6-7 — The American Friends Service Committee aided by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith began the first of a series of seminars for public school teachers on the problems of an integrated school system. Applications were received from 153 teachers and principals in 60 schools.

The American Friends representative wrote in April, 1953: "Our staff members, the chairmen, and consultants all agreed that the teachers have shown a most constructive response to the possibilities of integrated schools. This experience reinforces our belief in the ability and integrity of our Washington teachers."

Seven seminars on the problems to be expected in an integrated school system were held through 1953 and into 1954. Altogether, 182 Washington, D. C., teachers and school administrators participated because of their own interest in and expectation of eventual school desegregation.

In a summary report on the seminars dated April 1, the sponsors made the point that teachers, "convinced that school integration will come and that they will be affected," were in need of help.

Recurrent in the expanding intergroup program, for the most part still conducted outside the schools but with the full cooperation of school officials, was the theme that integration is coming. The question: What to do about it when it comes?

1953 April 28 — The Superintendent of Schools circularized the field staff with the announcement of workshop scholarships on intergroup education offered by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Community Council, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

## FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIRTY YEARS OF TEACHING

*1954 March 19 — The Friday evening session of the seminar on problems of an integrated school system had come to a close, although friendly yet intense conversation continued among the group on such practical questions as, "Will teachers be transferred to other schools against their wishes? What about new teachers, will they all take the same examination?"*

*In the atmosphere of confidence, which always results from a well-conducted group study, a Negro teacher, obviously in a solemn mood, said to me: "In thirty years of teaching in the District Schools I have never before had a chance to meet with white teachers."*

*All at once a staggering truth became clear: Despite the practice of setting up "mixed" committees for curriculum work, textbook selection and special projects, most Negro and white teachers had never had the experience of working together on educational problems. Communication was negligible in extent, diffusion or sharing of know-how was hardly worth mentioning.*

## CHAPTER III

# SCHOOL DESEGREGATION: THREE PHASES OF PREPARATION

Three major steps taken by the schools make up a most important part of the total program of preparation for change: (1) The Board of Education's invitation to community groups to submit in written or oral form, or both, suggestions as to how to desegregate; (2) the superintendent's staff-study to devise a plan; and (3) the first system-wide in-service program on intergroup education initiated and directed by the superintendent with the cooperation of the Board of Education.

### The Board of Education Invites The Community to Help

At its meeting on December 17, 1952, the Board of Education opened up to public discussion the question of how desegregation should be processed, if it was to take place at all.

The epoch-making resolution was as follows:

"That at a regular or adjourned meeting of the Board or at a special such meeting as the president desires to call, the Board, through its president and superintendent, request to appear before it leading citizens of this community, officials of the District of Columbia, members of the clergy and group representatives to give the Board the benefit of their advice on two suggestions: (1) the question of the mechanics of integration, should it be ordered, and (2) what educational preparation might be deemed necessary in order to make integration, if it is ordered, work more freely."

At a subsequent meeting the superintendent recommended to the Board of Education that interested individuals and organizations be invited to submit their suggestions in writing. This report was approved by the Board with one member voting "no" on the grounds that the action of the Board in requesting suggestions was premature.

By April 15, 1953, the superintendent and the Board of Education had received 160 replies to their invitation to groups and individuals to make suggestions on the two issues preceding.

In a report to the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools summarized the statements in detail in order to provide a useful guide for further study and possible action.

"About two-thirds of the communications received gave definite suggestions on one or the other or both of the topics. . . . The remaining third of the letters did not reply to the question for various reasons, such as the question (of how to integrate) was premature; the writer opposed segregation; the writer favored segregation; and more time was needed to study the problems."

1. *Statement of Policy:*

On the question of statement of policy, according to the superintendent's report, the suggestion most often made was that it was most essential for the "Board of Education to make a forceful clear statement of policy and having announced the policy shall proceed without hesitancy to implement it."

The policy recommended by the respondents who dealt with this subject was that "the business and activities of the schools will be conducted on an impartial basis independent of race and without discriminatory treatment of any group."

2. *Method of Integration:*

The analysis of the replies showed a wide difference of opinion as to how rapidly integration should be accomplished. As to the time schedule, the range of the proposals was from immediate and complete desegregation throughout the system to beginning with the kindergarten and gradually working upward through the grades.

3. *Advisory Committees:*

Several individuals and groups recommended setting up advisory committees to assist the community, the superintendent, and the Board of Education.

4. *Integration of Pupils:*

In his analysis of replies, the superintendent found the "greatest agreement to be on the subject of assigning pupils to schools." His report continued: "It is believed by the groups reporting that these assignments should be based on the proximity of residence to school with all schools having clearly-defined boundaries established as the result of a complete census of school-age children."

5. *Integration of Teachers:*

It was found that "there was a wide divergence in the suggestions on the first integration of teachers, ranging from having all faculties integrated immediately to transferring teachers on a voluntary basis." Related suggestions were: protect tenure, appoint solely on merit, set up a single Board of Examiners in place of the two Boards and give the same examination to all applicants for the same position, and merge the two teachers colleges.

6. *Integration of Administrative Officers:*

Because school officers with city-wide responsibilities came in pairs, with one for white and one for Negro schools in the segregated school system, several suggestions were received as to what the administrative organization should be. As with teachers, the suggestion was made that tenure should be protected. Another suggestion was that the need for administrative positions under an integrated system should be determined and school officials be assigned to needed positions according to their professional qualifications and longevity.

7. *Program for the Education of the Community:*

The Board of Education was told that "it was considered particularly important that the public have a clear understanding of the policies on integration adopted by the Board and that a favorable opinion toward the new system be developed."

8. *Educational Program of Preparation for Integration:*

According to the digest of replies received by the superintendent, "many groups suggested the complete and immediate utilization of the *Handbook on Intercultural Education* with full authority by the Board of Education for such types of intergroup activities as are recommended in the handbook."

Ideas suggested were immediate removal of all barriers to joint interracial activities of parents, students, and teachers. White and Negro parents should meet on common problems.

The administration should encourage and arrange interracial music festivals, assemblies, mixed panels of pupils to discuss common problems, sports events.

One group particularly interested in sports suggested beginning at once on a voluntary basis to consider interracial contests in the less emotional sports, such as golf, tennis, track, and swimming. They said, "Large spectator and highly emotional sports such as football, baseball, and basketball should wait until players, coaches, officials, and spectators have had a thorough indoctrination in their responsibilities."

Many groups pointed out the immediate need for exchanges of classroom visits by teachers and officers of both divisions of the school system.

On May 7, 1953, the Board of Education conducted a public hearing on the question of the mechanics of integration and what educational preparation should be made in order to prepare for it. Most of the suggestions were similar to those that had already been presented in writing.

In its decision to open the problem of integration to public discussion, the Board of Education put the community on notice that a Supreme Court decision against segregation would be considered a mandate to proceed to desegregate. This constituted an important contribution to community preparation for this event.

## The Superintendent Develops a Plan

Early in 1953 the superintendent began a series of staff meetings with a single well-defined objective: to develop a desegregation plan to be used when and if the United States Supreme Court should invalidate the legislation that supported segregation by race in the District of Columbia public schools. Like a good general, the superintendent was determined to have a plan ready when it was needed.

The blueprint that resulted from these staff sessions, later to be widely known as the Corning Plan, did not, of course, contain all the features each member of the staff had suggested. It did, however, constitute a selection of guiding principles and working details that were developed after discussion and study for more than a year.

Although the Corning Plan will not be described in detail here, the method of work used to develop it offers a good illustration of democratic school administration in practice.

## An In-Service Program in Intergroup Education

In December, 1953, the superintendent advised the Board of Education of his intention to conduct a series of conferences or workshops for teachers and officers on intercultural relationships. This was necessary because of the impending Supreme Court decision, although the outcome of the meetings on intergroup relations would be valuable whether or not segregation in the schools was maintained.

On December 30, 1953, the superintendent announced the appointment of a committee to plan the in-service program in intercultural education for the second semester of the then current school term. The committee suggested a plan for a series of meetings on intergroup education for the members of the Board of Education, the superintendent's top-level staff and all administrative and advisory personnel.

In a circular to field officers dated March 9, 1954, the superintendent, reviewing the results of the first seminar conducted for his staff and members of the Board of Education on March 3, informed them that the purpose of the meeting had been "to create a climate for general understanding and improved relationships among the various segments of our population." The effort was characterized by a down-to-earth consideration of the following topics:

1. Practical problems in the field of intercultural relationships now existing.
2. Practical problems in interracial relationships which may present themselves if schools are integrated.
3. Practical solutions to these problems.
4. Procedures for breaking down prejudices and misunderstandings.
5. Methods of developing cooperative and harmonious effort among the parents of the schools and all school personnel.

A circular dated March 24, 1954, publicized the schedule of dates for six seminars running through April 30 for supervisors, heads of departments, and field administrators. It also announced two interracial meetings for all teachers and officers to be held on May 24 and 25 at one of the high school auditoriums. By this time, it turned out, the Supreme Court decision had been handed down and the Board of Education had approved a history-making policy statement that ended racial segregation in the public schools. Few meetings in the local school system were more dramatic than these two, when the Superintendent of Schools met his teachers for the first time after desegregation had been ordered by the Board of Education.

In his remarks to his staff at those meetings the superintendent pointed out that, "The integration of the schools of this city is no longer a matter of conjecture — of opinion — of option — it is a reality."

He told the teachers that, "Transition will not be easy. . . . Many problems will be encountered. . . . It is expected and required that each of us in his own capacity will do everything to make the plan work."

"Doing everything in our power," he said, "means more than a passive acquiescence and acceptance of the idea. It involves a lot of positive doing — a determined effort to adjust ourselves and to help others to adjust to all of the changes in school organization and relationship with which we will be involved, and a determined and positive effort to make newly-established relationships agreeable and helpful."

He concluded that, "Since the announcement of the Supreme

Court decision, there have been many evidences that differences of opinion which may have existed heretofore with respect to the possible integration of our schools, have now been resolved to the extent that there seems to be a general feeling that the pattern has been set and that we as a professional group are now ready to supply the implementing action."

## EARLY INTEGRATION BY TELEVISION

*1952 March 10 — On this date the District of Columbia Schools in cooperation with WRC, the local NBC station, began a series of television programs that brought Negro teachers into white classrooms and white teachers into Negro classrooms by means of the television camera.*

*Appearing before the cameras, Negro and white teachers of science, music, social studies, and foreign languages of the District Public Schools taught children in elementary classrooms throughout the city.*

*From 1952 to the end of the series in 1955, up to 35,000 elementary school children in more than 1,000 classrooms received instruction each week from Negro and white teachers and observed groups of children from both divisions of the school system as they took part in the lessons in the television studio.*

*The purpose was to test the value of television as a means of supplementing regular classroom instruction. One of the important extra dividends was described by a fifth grade student in this way: "The lessons by television make us feel like we are together all over the city."*

*The experience showed that good teaching is not determined by racial characteristics, but we learned also that there were some differences in techniques that seemed to be attributable to experience backgrounds and separateness in practices and supervision.*

*In a limited way, some degree of integration was already going on in the District schools in 1952. At any rate, television was creating readiness for the real thing in 1954.*

## CHAPTER IV

# SCHOOL DESEGREGATION: TIME TABLE

### May 17, 1954: The Supreme Court Decision

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of *Bolling v. Sharpe,* in which the petitioners had challenged the validity of segregation in the public schools of the District of Columbia, alleging "that such segregation deprives them of due process of law under the Fifth Amendment."

The Supreme Court stated that it had on this "day held that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits the states from maintaining racially segregated public schools." Because the Fifth Amendment, which is applicable in the District of Columbia, does not contain an equal protection clause as does the Fourteenth Amendment, which applies only to the states, a different legal problem existed in the District of Columbia.

The opinion declared that "racial segregation in the public schools of the District of Columbia is a denial of the due process of law guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution."

As in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education,* the Supreme Court restored the case to the docket for reargument on questions previously propounded in order to have "the full assistance of the parties in formulating decrees. . . ."

### May 25, 1954: The Board of Education Acts

On May 19, 1954, the Board of Education appointed a special committee "for the purpose of drafting principles for presentation to the Board of Education at a special meeting to be held May 25, 1954, on the question of integration in the public schools."

On May 22, 1954, the special committee of three members of the Board of Education, along with three additional members of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools and the secretary of the Board, adopted unanimously a declaration of policy which it presented to the Board of Education three days later.

The declaration of policy, which was adopted by the Board by a vote of six to one on May 25, 1954, was as follows:

"In the light of the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Bolling v. Sharpe*, the Board of Education of the District of Columbia, believing it to be in the best interest of all citizens of the community of Washington, and necessary to the effective administration of an integrated system within the public schools, hereby adopts the following declaration of policy:

1. Appointments, transfers, preferments, promotions, ratings, or any other matters respecting the officers and employees of the Board shall be predicated solely upon merit and not upon race or color.
2. No pupil of the public schools shall be favored or discriminated against in any matter or in any manner respecting his or her relationship to the schools of the District of Columbia by reason of race or color.
3. Attendance of pupils residing within school boundaries, hereafter to be established, shall not be permitted at schools located beyond such boundaries, except for the most necessitous reasons or for the public convenience, and in no event for reasons related to the racial character of the school within the boundaries in which the pupil resides.
4. The Board believes that no record should be kept or maintained in respect to any pupil not enrolled in a public school on or prior to June 17, 1954, or in respect to any officer or employee not employed within the system on or prior to that date in which information is solicited or recorded relating to the color or race of any such person.
5. That the maximum efficient use shall be made of all physical facilities without regard to race or color.

"In support of the foregoing principles, which are believed to be cardinal, the Board will not hesitate to use its full powers. It is pledged to a complete and wholehearted pursuit of these objectives.

"We affirm our intention to secure the right of every child, within his own capacity, to the full, equal and impartial use of all school facilities, and the right of all qualified teachers to teach where needed within the school system. And, finally, we ask the aid, cooperation and goodwill of all citizens and the help of the Almighty in holding to our stated purposes."

Why did the Board of Education adopt a desegregation policy so soon after the action of the Supreme Court decision declaring segregation in the District of Columbia unconstitutional but before the decree was issued? Was this action ill-considered and irresponsible? Or was it in the order of statesmanship — the risks coolly calculated against the practical, moral and human values to be gained?

The insistent battering-ram of public opinion against racial discrimination in the capital city had already broken down many traditional barriers and had evoked much preparation for change within the school system itself, so that a state of mind favorable to immediate desegregation existed at the time. Moreover, the school administration and the Board of Education were painfully aware of the several pending demands for school facilities by Negroes whose children attended over-crowded schools although they lived near half-empty ones. In plain language, the choice was to desegregate or, without any moral, rational, or legal support, to continue segregation, reassigning schools and children in at least nine school areas.

The action of the Board of Education, then, was in the main a moral and practical necessity. That the Board was wise enough to be aware of this is praiseworthy in itself. That it had anticipated this outcome in earlier actions by inviting public help in planning desegregation was a highly intelligent interpretation of trends. A stirring declaration of moral purpose backed up by the courage to support it, the May 25th policy statement will undoubtedly find a place among the best in the literature of political thought in the years to come.

## May 25, 1954: The Superintendent's Plan Is Presented to the Board

How big was the task of implementing the policy decision on desegregation adopted by the Board of Education?

The readjustment in mechanics to be completed between May 25 and September 13 was complex and extensive. A difficult psychological adjustment was required of the community as plans were announced and unavoidable uncertainties developed.

The superintendent had a desegregation plan, complete as to principle and quite finished as to detail, ready for presentation to the Board of Education eight days after the Supreme Court decision was reported. He had directed his staff in the preparation of the plan in a series of work sessions that began in April of 1953.

The following is a digest of the desegregation plan that later came to be known nationally as the Corning Plan.

1. Complete desegregation of all schools is to be accomplished with the least possible delay.

Thus the plan rejected (and much thought went into the making of this decision) a gradual or piecemeal system of integration.

There is reason to believe that the breadth of the desegregation program in Washington, D. C., gave it stability and momentum that carried it through periods of stress. Token compliance involving a few pupils in a single school makes possible the concentration of attack upon a limited target. Events here and elsewhere seem to indicate that it is wise to plan on a bold and broad scale rather than timidly and in a limited way.

2. New boundaries are to be established for each school.

It was pointed out that thus the optimum use of each school can be made. "Adherence to the boundary limitations," according to the superintendent's statement, "must be definite and without exception."

Experience showed, however, that use had to be made of the "escape" feature of the Board's policy statement on boundaries.

According to Board policy, pupils were not to attend schools outside their boundaries except for "necessitous reasons or for the public convenience." It proved to be impossible and indeed unwise to follow through to the letter on complete and arbitrary adherence to boundaries. In fact, the record of the May 25 Board meeting indicates that deviation from boundaries for health reasons such as emotional upset could be made.

3. Appointments and promotions of all school personnel are to be made on a merit system and assignment will be in keeping with the needs of the service. Tenure rights will be preserved, although the duties of some officers will necessarily be changed.

4. The transition of a desegregated system is to be accomplished by natural and orderly means. Artificial and immediate reassignments of large numbers of pupils, teachers, and officers would be disruptive and should be avoided.

Another provision in the plan was the so-called optional feature, which permitted pupils to remain in the schools in which they were already enrolled, unless those schools were overcrowded or would become so when new pupils within the prescribed boundaries entered. Pupils living within the boundary of a school other than the one they were attending had the option of transfer, and if they elected to do so would be reassigned to their new school.

In processing the policies agreed upon by the Board of Education, the superintendent outlined the following steps:

1. New zones for each elementary, junior or senior high school were to be established.
2. Pupils new to the system or to a particular school level were to be enrolled according to the new school zones.
3. Pupils then enrolled in a given school but living outside the

new boundaries drawn for it would be permitted to continue there unless the school became overcrowded. If they preferred, they might transfer to the school serving the zone of their residence.

4. Pupils living outside the school zone would be transferred to their neighborhood schools if necessary to relieve overcrowding.

The plan for pupil assignment provided for immediate enrollment in schools according to the new zones for pupils living long distances from their former schools, for pupils new to the schools and for transfers required to relieve overcrowding. Most students were not permitted to use their option to change schools until September, 1955, except for scheduled adjustments later in the fall of 1954.

The superintendent's plan provided that authority for placement of all pupils would be delegated to his office to be exercised within the Board's policy. In accepting this provision, the Board of Education avoided political pressures on behalf of individual pupils whose parents might want special privileges as to choice of schools.

When the Board of Education declared the selection and assignment of personnel must be solely upon merit, it set definite guide lines for the superintendent's plan for the assignment of educational personnel:

1. Employees then in service would continue in their present assignments, unless the needs of the services required their reassignment or they themselves should request transfer in the normal course of events. In other words, the assignment policy would result in no more than the normal number of changes. Enforced transfers to provide mixed faculties in the schools would not be required.
2. When vacancies occurred, replacements would be selected from among the best qualified applicants.
3. All new teachers would be selected by a single Board of Examiners and by means of the same examinations.

By the opening of school in September, 1954, new boundaries were to be set up, students from 12 overcrowded Negro elementary schools were to be transferred to 14 less crowded white schools, students from five overcrowded Negro junior high schools were to be transferred to three less crowded white schools, a large number of students were to be reassigned from a Negro senior high school to a white senior high school, a small Negro elementary school was to be closed, and the two teachers colleges were to be opened to Negro and white students.

### MAKING NEW BOUNDARIES AND DESTROYING OLD FENCES

*When the assignment to redraw school boundaries was received from the superintendent, the directors of elementary education in charge of administration decided to assign teams of principals by areas to do this job.*

*Principals whose schools were in the same areas were assigned to work together as a team, organized in this manner: All the elementary principals met at the Petworth School in a two-day work session. They came armed with maps dotted to show the residences of their pupils, with tabulations of the numbers of pupils by blocks and grades, estimates of new enrollments and all the data needed to set new boundaries for schools that up to this time drew children from the same neighborhoods according to race.*

*For the first time, nearly 100 principals and other elementary school officers worked together in the same place and to the same purpose — not entirely forgetful of differences in race, often self-conscious, sometimes suspicious, but always professional.*

*Out of this enterprise came better boundaries than could have been drawn in a central office. But even more important old fences were being torn down, for the elementary principals had begun to work together as an integrated group — found that they were successful despite their lack of experience and grew in trust of one another for their work in the days ahead.*

At a meeting on June 2, 1954, the Board of Education approved the blueprint for desegregation. The superintendent and his staff began at once to reorganize the schools, certainly to an extent never before attempted here and possibly without precedent anywhere else. All this was to be done along with the usual preparation for the opening of schools not much more than two months later.

## September 13, 1954: School Integration Begins

A school system which in 1950 could not allow a Negro actor to appear on the stage of a senior high school assembly opened its schools on September 13, 1954, with Negro and white pupils attending classes together in 116 (73 per cent) of the schools and white and Negro teachers instructing classes together in 37 (23 per cent) of the schools.

In McKinley High School, formerly white, there were 588 white and 345 Negro pupils, a result brought about by the planned transfer of Negro pupils from a nearby high school that was to be discontinued as a technical school. Other formerly all white high schools had some Negro students, but the complete integration would not occur until the new boundaries came into full effect. It will be remembered that students were to remain in their former schools unless transferred for administrative reasons or unless they changed their residences. Other formerly "white" high schools had Negro memberships of 12 and less on the second day of school. There was some degree of integration in nine senior high schools, none in three.

In the five vocational high schools, according to the report of September 14, there was no integration either of pupils or teachers.

Thirteen junior high schools were interracial as to pupils, seven were not. Seven junior high schools opened with mixed faculties.

The extent of integration was greater in the elementary schools because at this level the desegregation plan called for the admission of new kindergarten and first grade pupils to schools according to the new boundaries, whereas for the 1954 school year new boundaries for junior and senior high schools were not in full effect.

In the elementary schools, 95 were integrated as to pupils, and 26 were not. Of the 121 elementary schools, 29 had biracial faculties.

On November 4, 1954, 74,447 pupils were attending 123 integrated schools (75 per cent of the total). About a year later, when desegregation had been almost completed, 144 schools (87.37 per cent of the total) had biracial memberships. Altogether, 92,273 students were attending schools that had Negro and white memberships in varying proportions.

One of the points stressed in newspaper and editorial comment about desegregation day was the apparent smoothness with which the schools opened. It was natural indeed that the absence of confusion and incidents should have been commented upon, both because of the scope of the operation and its emotional overtones.

Press comment on the opening days of school is a source of fairly objective evaluation of the way in which the adjustment was made.

"Integrated D. C. Schools Enjoy Calm Opening Day" headlined the *Washington Post and Times Herald*. The lead paragraph was: "District public schools opened yesterday with a minimum of first day confusion as many principals, teachers, and pupils were introduced to school integration."

"School Integration Gets Smooth Start" headlined the *Washington Daily News* for September 14, 1954. "Nearly 100,000 District public school children settled down to work today with a minimum of reported opposition to merging of white and Negro pupils and teachers," the article said. The *Daily News* quoted a senior high school principal as saying that he had an increasing admiration for his youngsters. "Look at the attention they're getting. Newspaper reporters and photographers swarmed around here this morning. It wouldn't be surprising if all this publicity had thrown some students off the beam. But we didn't have a single problem." His high school had received nearly 400 Negro pupils on opening day.

*The Washington Star* on the afternoon of the opening day began its story this way: "Racial Integration in Schools Goes Smoothly on the First Day." So went the story of opening day, a tribute to the good will and constructive citizenship of most of the people of Washington, D. C.

## September to December, 1954: A Period of Turbulence

While the initial desegregation action proceeded with smoothness, opposition appeared from two different directions. There were those amongst the adherents of integration who thought the Superintendent's time-table was too slow and that all students should immediately be assigned to schools in the zones in which they lived. The Negro Federation of Civic Associations, for example, publicly oblicly objected to the desegregation schedule, and some Negro parents requested that their children be immediately transferred to formerly white schools nearer their homes.

More persistent were the actions of those opposing desegregation. These actions included 1) petitions to the courts to halt the planned desegregation program; 2) protests against pupil and teacher assignments; and 3) encouragement of student strikes in a number of secondary schools. With reference to the first course, the white Federation of Citizens Associations asked the court to enjoin the Board of Education from pursuing immediate integration. This effort failed.

A number of white parents sought permission to enroll their children in predominantly white schools even if these schools were not within their immediate residential zone.

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"We have just moved in from Philadelphia," a mother said by telephone, "and I don't object to integrated schools. I've attended them myself. But my little girl is the only white child in her class, and all the teachers and the principal in the school are Negro, and she doesn't feel comfortable although everyone is as nice to her as they can be. I used to work a lot in the PTA. If there were just more white teachers and pupils in the school, it would be all right."

• • •

Obviously angry when he called, the father made it clear that he was protesting the enrollment of his daughter in the kindergarten of his neighborhood school according to the new boundaries. The problem was that she would be among only a few white children in the new kindergarten. Furthermore, he said that he objected to having his child attend school with Negro children under any conditions.

With considerable finality he refused to see anything illogical in this view, considering that his daughter's playmates included Negro children, that he and his family lived above his grocery store, and that his patrons were for the most part Negroes.

* * *

To establish uniformity in handling such appeals, which together made a considerable total, the superintendent appointed an administrative committee to rule on each case. Emotional hardships were recognized for adjustment. These included cases where the pupil, white or Negro, was among a very small minority in the school and his parent had appealed for relief.

The most serious protest against the assignment of Negro teachers to a predominantly white school was made by a group of 17 parents and guardians of pupils in an elementary school in a letter to the Board of Education reported in the October 20, 1954 minutes. They charged that such appointments "are not in the best interest of the children especially in elementary schools, because of the close relationship between teacher and pupil . . . and that this policy will eventually be detrimental to the entire teaching staff and lower the quality of our schools."

The group of parents tried to enlist the support of other PTA's in the city, failed in this, and were not successful in changing the policy of appointment by merit.

One Monday morning early in October, 1954, a number of students in three high schools failed to report for classes. This action followed the widely publicized student demonstrations in Milford and Baltimore.

By Friday of the same week, most of the students were back in class. Effective leadership by the school principals, decisive action by the Superintendent of Schools, sensible management by the police department, and the inherent good sense of most of the students and their parents prevented a prolongation of demonstration. At the peak, about 2500 junior and senior high school students were out of school while over 100,000 pupils continued in classes. Some of the absenteeism stemmed from a fear of involvement rather than an objection to desegregation. Some of it was a good natured desire to have a holiday.

Any reasonable observer would have predicted a period of turbulence in community relations during the transition from a segregated to a desegregated school system. What happened in this respect was not unexpected. Throughout this sensitive period, however, the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools held in the main to their objective: full desegregation by September, 1955.

## February 16, 1955: Top Staff Reorganized For New Functions

Under the dual school system, the administrative staff included two first assistant superintendents, one Negro and one white, directly responsible to the superintendent for general supervision of the senior high schools, vocational high schools, junior high schools, and elementary schools.

At the time of desegregation, the two first assistant superintendents also were specifically in charge of the senior high schools. In the case of the Negro schools, the first assistant superintendent was by law in sole charge of all Negro schools. His authority was such that his constituents sometimes called him their superintendent.

Subordinate to the two first assistant superintendents were three white and three Negro associate superintendents who were in charge of elementary schools, junior and vocational high schools, and the departments of research. The white associate superintendents were subordinate to the white first assistant superintendent and the Negro associate superintendents were subordinate to the Negro first assistant superintendent.

The associate superintendents in charge of personnel, buildings and grounds and the assistant to the superintendent in charge of business affairs had system-wide responsibilities at all levels and for both white and Negro schools.

At the supervisory level positions were also duplicated. For example, the city-wide head of the department of English came in two's, one for white and one for Negro schools.

Cutting through the inherent complexity of the double-line of administration, the superintendent specified as primary the principle that, "The unification of the administration and supervision of the schools is essential to a unified system."

His plan, therefore, placed the direction of the schools at all levels in one line of authority.

Thus former Negro and white schools were combined under the direction of a single assistant superintendent, who in turn was responsible to the deputy superintendent in charge of school management and supervision.

It will be noted that the superintendent set up his plan of reorganization to establish more efficient management relationships through the unification and coordination of all segments of the school system according to function. Having established a professionally sound blueprint, he reassigned personnel to make the best use of each person's talents, special abilities, interests, and educational backgrounds.

To the normal magnitude of the task of making changes in staff assignments must in this case be added the adjustment of Negro and white personnel to new city-wide duties in a newly integrated school system.

In each of the top offices were placed Negro and white personnel who had authority over and responsibility for schools that were manned by Negro and white teachers and principals.

The superintendent had the difficult responsibility of reassigning staff in the best interests of the service. Each of his staff officers were asked to list his assignment preferences according to first, second, and third choice. In doing so, most added an expression of willingness to accept whatever assignment the superintendent deemed best for the service.

This plan for top staff reorganization was approved by the Board of Education and by the end of the school year in 1955 the transfer of duties to the new offices was completed.

## September, 1955: School Desegregation Is Complete

According to the October 21, 1955 membership report, 144 of the District public schools had both white and Negro memberships. In these schools, which made up 87.3 per cent of the schools, 92,273 pupils attended desegregated schools.

To some earnest people, integration means that there must be intermixing in every school. If it falls short of that, the school system is not completely integrated and the evils of Jim Crowism are preserved.

In the District of Columbia no child is denied admission to any public school or to any group within that school because of race. Moreover, teachers and officers are assigned to schools on merit and according to the needs of the service. Hence, it seems correct to say that the District schools are now fully integrated.

Although the Board of Education recognizes the possibility of emotional difficulties among children, these problems are generally greater among their parents. Exceptions, therefore, continue to be made to allow children to attend schools other than the one in their neighborhood. Even in these cases, children are reassigned to integrated schools. Actually, few of the requests for transfers are directly attributable to a desire to escape integration completely.

For the most part, however, children attend their own schools in the course of events and the opening of school in the third year of integration had become almost routine — with not much more than the normal complement of problems and confusions.

## ILLUSTRATING THE BENEFITS OF THE MERIT SYSTEM

*After the high schools opened in the fall of 1956, it became evident that an enrollment increase in mathematics and science in one of the schools required the addition of another teacher.*

*Among the few applicants only one had the required qualifications. He was so good, in fact, that his department chief induced him not to leave the Federal service. He refused an offer of temporary appointment.*

*Within a few days, luckily, another applicant appeared on the scene — a man who had just finished his stint with the armed services and was now looking for a teaching position. He, too, had the preparation, moral character, the interest and the enthusiasm which characterize the good teacher. He accepted the offer of appointment.*

*Both applicants were Negro. Under the school employment policy, both could be offered an appointment to a school that is predominantly white. As a result; the best qualified teacher was assigned to the vacancy. Everyone benefits when manpower is used to the best advantage.*

## COME ON, YOU'RE ONE OF US

*While standing after lunch in a small group in the corridor outside their classroom, several junior high school boys reached an agreement that they too should join the students demonstrating against integration outside the building.*

*Nearby was a Negro boy, observing but standing apart from his classmates.*

*As they walked past him, one of the white boys turned toward him and shouted, "Hey, you! Come on!"*

*Startled, the Negro boy asked, "Who, me?"*

*"Yes, you," said the white boy. "You're one of us, aren't*

## CHAPTER V

# WINNING THE BATTLE AGAINST PREJUDICE

Anyone who would underestimate the difficulty of personal adjustment experienced by many parents, pupils, teachers, and officers in the transition to integrated schools in the District of Columbia would be guilty of naivete. At the same time, they would fail to give credit to those who rose above their fears and prejudices to do much better than they thought they could.

Many of the most memorable stories of people learning to live and work in new ways point up the nobler side of human nature and strangely enough are the ones most often recalled.

* * *

A principal of a downtown elementary school said that she had made up her mind to retire if the Supreme Court ruled against segregation. "You know that all my experience as a girl with my family at home, and all the years since, is against mixing with Negroes."

"But," she said tearfully and solemnly, "I've prayed over this again and again. I just can't leave my school now. I can't leave the school system now. My duty is here."

* * *

The president of a large and influential organization that had opposed the immediate desegregation began the telephone conversation with this statement: "I promised to report any racial problems that came to my attention with the idea that perhaps you could do something to prevent trouble. This incident sounds pretty serious to me," she added. "My phone has been ringing all morning."

She went on to explain that the grandmother of a girl in one of the elementary schools believed that the girl's dress had been slashed with a knife by a Negro boy at school. She displayed the dress in the neighborhood store where she worked.

"This is an example of what is happening to us now," she told anyone who would listen.

Investigation showed that the girl's dress had been torn when she was playing during recess. No Negro boys were involved at all. The grandmother was so informed, and the misunderstanding was corrected.

But the really significant part of the incident is the cooperation of a community leader who despite an adverse point of view on the subject of immediate desegregation, worked to prevent the spread of rumors that might have led to public disorder.

* * *

The teacher of a mixed group in a downtown school was proud of a spelling paper done by a Negro boy in her fourth grade class.

"He just wasn't doing a thing," she said. "I had to have his father come over several times. Now the boy is doing so much better. The parents are really making him work."

She added, as if she had made a discovery, "They can do it if they try."

## FEAR TURNS TO FAVOR

*After the opening of school in September, 1954, a white mother who had been worried about integration in the first place was upset when she found that her child had a Negro teacher. When she appeared in the principal's office to transfer her child to another school, the principal gently persuaded her to give the situation a further trial of two or three weeks. The mother was so well pleased with the child's teacher and class by the time the two weeks had passed that she withdrew her request for transfer.*

It won't be easy and it won't happen for many years, but we must learn to think about people as individuals, behaving in a particular context rather than as members of a race with a generalized predisposition to behave in characteristic ways.

If a Negro boy carries a switch blade knife, it doesn't follow that all do, or that he does because he is a Negro, or that a boy of another race would not. Simple as this logic is, too few people comprehend it — or, to put the more favorable interpretation upon the situation, refuse to apply it to what is happening in the nation's capital.

Most common among the prevailing stereotypes are these: (1) most Negroes carry switch blade knives; (2) most Negroes are sexually precocious and are amoral as to sex; (3) most Negro pupils are excitable and difficult to control; (4) most Negroes learn slowly, are academically retarded because of innate characteristics.

In the District of Columbia, the big human relations problem and the most demanding educational necessity is to get acceptance of the idea that the foregoing harmful stereotypes can be partially corrected by doing two very simple things: Changing the word *most* to *some* and substituting for *Negroes* the word *pupils.*

To test this technique, decide which of the central characters in the following stories are Negro and which are white. With racial identity hidden, it will be found that the problems illustrated in these incidents are those of people, not Negroes and whites:

1. In a letter to a school principal, a father wrote: "I find it

necessary to keep (my two children) home from school today due to the beating they got from one of your larger boys (of another race). . . . My wife is not able to go with them back and forth to school. . . . I think it is awful to deprive a child of his education."

2. In this case a father, enraged because his seven-year-old son had been "picked on" by a classmate, rushed into the school playground one evening after school to take care of the problem himself. Coming upon the boy that he believed to be responsible, the man picked him up bodily, slammed him to the ground, and beat the lad around the head.

In the police booking, it was discovered that the father had neglected to report that he lived outside the District of Columbia and was therefore also charged with default of tuition charges.

3. According to the report from the principal, a mother slapped a girl in the playground because, as the mother put it, she was mad about the way this girl was treating her daughter. The parents of the assaulted child insisted upon filing charges against the mother. Although no one was badly hurt, the police coordinator and the school principal spent several trying hours working with both parents to restore peace and good feeling. The mother of the first part promised not to take matters into her own hands again.

4. On the last day of school, a high school boy who was absent without leave from his own school waited at one of the main entrances at a nearby high school until a boy of another race came out and then, without provocation and without warning, struck him full in the mouth. Apprehended later by the police, the boy could give no coherent reason for his behavior. Hostility toward his own school, where he was getting a bad report card, became focused on race and he gave expression to his anger in the attack upon the first boy he encountered.

5. One of the boys involved in this incident was white, the other was Negro. They were members of a gymnasium group practicing touch football on the grounds before school and under the direction of the teacher.

While playing, one of the boys grabbed the other by the arms and as he tried to pull away said, angrily, "Wait a minute, I'm not through with you yet." Thereupon the other boy delivered such a blow to the face as to require several stitches to repair the damage.

6. This is the story of a first grader who had become so preoccupied with sex he could not be allowed alone with the girls in his class. Several mothers quite justifiably complained because the boy had molested their daughters.

In this case, the home conditions were so bad from a moral point of view that the boy had apparently learned about sex behavior from direct observation.

7. In great anguish, a principal telephoned about the case of a 10-year-old boy who needed special help because of his irresponsible behavior in the classroom. "He is a most hopeless case," she said. "You'd think he had no home training or care at all." Further inquiry led to the discovery that his mother sent the boy out in the streets for most of the evening to get him away from home while she entertained male friends.

8. The high school boy came in to ask about transferring to another school. Afterwards, his embarrassed mother explained that he had written a note to the principal — to which he had forged her name — asserting that the family had moved to a new address. The note requested that the boy be transferred to the school nearest that address — which was predominantly of his own race.

When he was asked if the teachers or pupils had been unkind to him, he said, "I just didn't like it there." Pressed for an answer as to whether anyone threatened him, if the boys were unfriendly to him, his answer was, "They don't choose me for games in gym."

9. The teacher was of one race. The parents she told about were of another. The final exercises for sixth grade pupils and their parents had been completed and the parents and their children gathered in clusters to talk and congratulate each other. The parents of one of the students approached the teacher to tell her how much they appreciated her kindness to their daughter.

They seemed, said the teacher, so thoroughly sincere in their expression of affection for her that she felt more than repaid for the extra effort she had made to help the child.

10. This is a letter from a mother to a teacher: "I received your note and I think it was a very nice letter and sweet of you to be so kind and thoughtful. I am more happy than words can express to hear that my son is making such wonderful progress. I certainly have struggled with him, as you have, but if he does not get promoted in June, I will understand.

The parent is of one race, the teacher is of another.

11. This was written by a high school boy in trouble: "If I am allowed to finish high school, I will control my temper at all times. . . . My principal feels I have the ability and will power to complete high school. I promise if ever a conflict should occur between me and someone else, I will talk it over if possible. If it is not possible, I will walk away. These are my earnest intentions and my goal."

The principal was of one race, the boy, another.

12. The parent had joined with others of like mind in an informal luncheon to discuss a community problem.

During the conversation the topic of schools came up. It was in connection with this item of conversation that he explained that he had recently moved to a different part of the city. "We felt that the people coming into our old neighborhood were not going to be good for our children."

13. The child was unusually gifted — brilliant at the piano, a fledgling linguist at an early age. "It isn't that we don't have confidence in the schools," the father explained, "but we feel that our boy needed a more flexible and challenging program than they could offer. That's the only reason we have sent him to a private school."

14. While on her way home from school at noon, an attractive sixth grade girl, according to the report from the principal, was bumped into by a boy of about her own age. Both were of the same race. To act as her protector against further trouble with the boy, the girl's older brother, a junior high school student, accompanied her to school. For protection against the older boy, the one who had offended the girl called in reinforcements, two friends of his of a different race.

One against three seeming to be unreasonable odds, the girl's brother threatened them with a knife. One of the boys picked up a stick. All four used "very bad language," said the principal who had to ask for police help to break up the riotous proceedings. No one, she said, was physically assaulted.

### "I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE DISCIPLINARY CASES —," THE TEACHER SAID.

*A teacher of a special class for overaged boys, when asked if he had many serious disciplinary cases, said, "A serious disciplinary case is a relative thing. I've had pupils sent to me who were described as serious disciplinary problems who I didn't know were such from the way they acted in my class."*

## Adjustment by Change of Address

Human beings often seek to draw away from conditions which they find unacceptable. During the process of integration in the nation's capital, some white people changed residences in order to avoid sending their children to mixed schools. They adjusted to the change by withdrawing, a course of action which was within their prerogative to take and one which contributed in a negative way to the success of the operation.

From 1953 to 1954, when the schools were desegregated, the reduction in white enrollment was 7.8 per cent. The year before, the loss in white enrollment was 2.7, the year before, only two pupils, the year before that 1.2 per cent. The increased rate of loss has been maintained in 1955, when it was 6.3 per cent and in 1956 when it was 10.3 per cent over the year before.

To what extent integration was a causative factor will never be precisely known. Out-migration to suburban areas is a widespread phenomenon throughout the United States. For example, in the period between 1940-50, the increase in suburban growth in the New York City area was almost 19%, in Chicago, 31%, in Los Angeles, 69%, and in Cleveland almost 41%. In addition, for the first time in its history, New York City has had a population loss in its central city of 135,000 while in the same period there was an increase of 400,000 in the suburban areas. This population shift took place after 1950. A fair and reasonable assumption is that a significant amount of change of residence resulted from the reorganization of schools. Some of this withdrawal by out-migration, however, was caused by changes in neighborhoods. This was accompanied by lower social and cultural levels of the people moving in, by the dissimilarities in backgrounds as well as by the differences in race. The factors described here also force culturally and economically advantaged Negro families to move because they, too, desire an acceptable environment in which to rear their children.

Along with the sharp decrease in white enrollments in 1954, Negro enrollments continued to increase sharply at a rate of from 5.8 per cent in 1951 to a peak of 8.7 per cent in 1954. In 1956, the increase over the year before was 7.0 per cent.

### ENROLLMENT FACTS: 1956

Memberships: For the school system as a whole: 108,481.

White enrollment: 34,758, a decrease of 10.3 per cent from the year before.

Negro enrollment: 73,723, an increase of 7.0 per cent over the year before.

| Racial breakdown: | Elementary | Junior | Senior | Vocational |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of schools with Negro and white pupils | 104 | 21 | 9 | 5 |
| Number of schools with all Negro pupils | 15 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Number of schools with all white pupils | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 125 | 23 | 11 | 5 |

In 1954, 1955 and 1956, then, the white enrollment decrease was sharply accelerated while the rate of increase in Negro enrollment remained reasonably steady. That this happened offers no defense of segregation, nor does it suggest an argument against integration.

## Discipline in Integrated Schools

In the changeover to an integrated school system, the quality of school discipline has come in for much discussion. This is mainly because radical misbehavior, especially if it involves injury to others, becomes widely publicized and tends to make many innocent people guilty by association.

It must be said that disciplinary problems in the District public schools are all too numerous, that some are so serious as to threaten the physical safety of other pupils. Solutions to date, from the point of view of prevention or correction, have been elusive.

The subject of school discipline, the behavior of children and youth, cannot be treated without emotional overtones. Teachers experience a feeling of great pity, a desire to reach out and help, to obtain for these children in trouble the love and the compassion and the wisdom of the community, that they might be given a new opportunity.

When a volunteer psychiatrist says of a ten-year old Negro boy, he is hopeless, we can do nothing, there is more that touches upon this illness than race, for here is a child spiritually senile before he has begun to live and seemingly destined to cause others incalculable suffering.

When a little white girl tells her teacher that she has a new daddy because her other one went away the day before and isn't coming back, and then adds that her mother said she was too small to keep her warm nights and that's the reason for the new daddy, you don't

### THE STORY OF THE TROUBLED TEACHER

*It was said that the teacher, being new in the profession and still not experienced in working with children, was much depressed because of the bad behavior of several of the boys in her class. She often spoke of the unhappy events of the day and was just about ready to quit teaching.*

*A wise friend told her one day, "Tomorrow, list all of the nice things that happened in class along with the bad things that seemed so important."*

*At the end of the day, the new teacher told her friend, "Look at all the nice things the children did today — 23 of them — and only three little bad things."*

*After that she was happier about teaching and was a better teacher as well.*

really think that this is any worse because the girl is white. You wonder, rather, how the little girl will be living a few years later.

All this, of course, seems excessively sentimental, yet every instance of school discipline represents a person in trouble, someone who needs help, and who may be capable of benefiting from help. It is true that the behavior problems among some of the underprivileged Negro boys and girls are shocking to their white teachers and principals. But white teachers and principals who worked with deprived white children prior to integration are well aware of the fact that the problems are similar and are not peculiar to race.

Admitting that desegregation has added a new dimension to disciplinary problems and that too many cases, both Negro and white, are discouragingly severe, the real truth is that on any given school day a visitor in the District public schools will find school being held in normal order and in an impressively business-like manner.

The proportion of serious disciplinary cases to the total enrollment is relatively low, according to a survey of the number of severe disciplinary cases in each District public high school during the school year 1955-56.

In October, 1956, each principal was asked to report the number of students involved in a serious disciplinary offense during the preceding school term.

A serious disciplinary offense was defined for the purpose of this report as "one which seriously interfered with the rights of other

## TEST YOUR STEREOTYPES

*In order to highlight the point that disciplinary problems are universal and not a function of race, we list below the racial identification of the people involved in the cases on pages 56-59. Stereotypic thinking inevitably collapses in the face of reality.*

1. The "larger" boy was Negro.
2. The man who struck the student was white.
3. The woman who assaulted the child was white.
4. The boy who struck another student was white.
5. The boy who struck his playmate was Negro.
6. This student was white.
7. This student was white.
8. This student was Negro.
9. The teacher was Negro.
10. The teacher was Negro.
11. The pupil was Negro.
12. The parent was Negro.
13. The gifted child was Negro.
14. The boy who had a knife was white.

students with respect to their persons or property, morals or educational opportunity."

The 11 high schools with an enrollment of 13,218 reported 410 such cases, representing only 3.1 per cent of the high school population. One high school reported there was none and one reported 157 cases.

Two highly integrated schools reported that last year they had only 35 serious disciplinary cases in a combined enrollment of 2378, involving only 1.5 per cent of their students.

## Social Activities In Integrated Schools

In newly integrated schools during the first year, principals planned social programs with considerable caution, perhaps at times leaning over backwards to avoid setting the stage for an unpleasant or misunderstood incident. In the absence of any main office ruling on the subject, each school developed its own program with sensitivity to local attitudes and conditions.

In a limited number of cases, parents objected to square dancing in the physical education program among elementary school children on racial grounds, as some do, for example, for religious reasons. Without creating issues, the principals arranged to excuse the children whose parents objected to their taking part in such activities.

In dramatics, music, and physical education, where extracurricular programs bring the students together in informal situations, there has been no significant curtailment of program.

The dramatics club was preparing for the senior play after school in the auditorium of a high school where the enrollment includes

### THE BEST SCHOOL IN THE CITY

*The young man was in trouble. His problem: pride and a sense of offended justice. The assistant principal had ordered him to detention hall for being tardy to a class without excuse. He claimed his excuse was adequate, told the assistant principal that he would not go to detention hall, and was immediately suspended.*

*After he had been convinced that he was guilty of serious insubordination, he said: "This is still the best school in the city, but I just don't like the way they run it."*

*The boy: white*
*The school: 72.3 per cent Negro*
*The assistant principal: Negro*

about 20 per cent Negro students. Among the cast on the stage practicing a scene was a Negro boy who seemed to have an important role. Waiting their turn in the wings and in the auditorium were other students, Negro and white, talking quietly in small groups or studying their lines. In the fall of the third year of integration there was no evidence of racial consciousness in this group.

On a Saturday in October of the third year of integration, the interhigh school student council sponsored an all-day workshop for representatives of all the District high school student councils. More than a hundred students attended the session. It began with registration in the lobby, social small talk around the inevitable coke bar and was followed by a general session and section meetings on specific problems. After lunch in the school cafeteria the delegates went on to afternoon meetings lasting until four o'clock.

It seems almost extraneous to point out that these young people are not often the kind who receive public notice. Like most of the people of the community, they go about the business of being constructive citizens not wanting or expecting a special pat on the back. To have seen this group at work might have been a wholesome experience for those who are pessimistic about teen-agers in general and about their capacity to respect each other without regard to race.

## DEMONSTRATION: UNITY

*Date line: December 3, 1956*

*To get public reaction to the superintendent's proposed 70 million dollar building program to be financed by "borrowing," the Board of Education scheduled a public hearing to which citizens and organizations were invited.*

*PTA representatives spoke in support of the building program. Negro and white worked together with a common purpose and the deepest sincerity. Citizens' organizations whose spokesmen represented neighborhood units were heard in support of the program. This was a moving and effective demonstration of how people of good will forget their differences when they work on a big and demanding problem. In the way they acted, in their friendly attitude, the people seemed to be saying, "At last we are together for a common objective. We have a program we can all get behind."*

*The competitive and sometimes bitter spirit of pre-integration days, often characterized by the expression, "I want for my children as much as you have for your children," had miraculously become, "We want for* our *children."*

Most extra-curricular school activities, all of which include some degree of social experience, have continued without interruption since the schools were integrated in 1954. These include sports, journalism, speech activities, clubs, Red Cross. The catalog is almost endless. All of these activities are democratically interracial and provide excellent opportunities for experience in social and civic leadership.

Curtailment of social activities has not been significantly severe, when considered against the total activity program. Where it has occurred, the program was in the category of the purely social, such as dancing and even then, little of the formerly approved program has suffered. Two senior high schools did not have senior proms this year, in one case because the number of seniors wanting one was too small to justify the program and in the other because the principal believes the community served by the school would not support the project. Other recently integrated high schools held their senior proms as usual with satisfactory results.

## Athletics in Integrated Schools

Perhaps the severest test of the integration program here has been in interscholastic athletics. Unquestionably the boldest step taken was to integrate all interscholastic athletics beginning with the basketball season in 1954-1955.

The calculated risk in this instance was that rivalry in contact sports like football and basketball runs high and emotions between contesting schools may become supercharged. If to the normal competitive spirit is added the factor of race, the situation is obviously more explosive. Against this hazard, however, were the gains to be made: a direct and bold attack upon problems of racial antagonisms, an opportunity for students to grow by experience even if they received some bruises in the process, and the strengthening of the interscholastic program by consolidation.

In 1955-56, a full schedule of interscholastic sports was set up. A former all-Negro school won the interhigh championship in footbal and represented the public high schools in the championship game betwen the public and parochial schools. This game is sponsored annually by the *Washington-Post and Times Herald* and the Touchdown Club. The estimated 19,000 people attending the final game of the season saw good football, spirited rivalry, unexcelled good sportsmanship on the playing field.

Because interscholastic contests attract a public following, spectators often include hangers-on, people who establish a loyalty to a school although they are not students there. As irresponsible spectators, they are sometimes the trouble-makers. For the most part, the adults who follow the teams are loyal and well behaved, although not always conscious of the fact that they are attending a student activity, not a professional athletic contest.

In the contests, which draw a big student and adult following, the educational job is to teach acceptable behavior at these events. The District schools have found that much needs to be done as a part of the continuous program of social education, that while desegregation has made the problem more complex, it has resulted in an improved athletic program, and the problems arising here are neither unique nor new in interscholastic sports.

## TWO VALEDICTORIANS: 1956

The profiles of two valedictorians, one Negro and one white, dispel the notion of racial superiority. The comparability of accomplishments illustrates how superiority is an individual and not a racial characteristic.

| | VALEDICTORIAN SCHOOL A | VALEDICTORIAN SCHOOL B |
|---|---|---|
| SEX: | Male | Male |
| AGE: | 17 years | 17 years 6 mos. |
| RANK IN CLASS: | First in 280 | First in 326 |
| AVERAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADES: | 95 | 98 |
| PERCENTILE RANK IN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS: | | |
| Correctness and Appropriateness of Expression | 96 | 99 |
| Understanding of Basic Social Concepts | 98 | 98 |
| Background in the Natural Sciences | 76 | 95 |
| Ability to do Quantitative Thinking | 97 | 99 |
| RECEIVED AND USING SCHOLARSHIPS: | Yale University | Yale University |
| SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: | Lt. Colonel in Cadet Corps<br>President, National Honor Society<br>Member, Junior Classical League<br>Quill and Scroll<br>Sports Editor, School Newspaper<br>Manager, Varsity Basketball Team<br>Member, Varsity Tennis Team | Jr. Town Meeting<br>Social Studies Club<br>Science Club<br>German Club<br>Intra-mural Football |

## CHAPTER VI

# NEEDED: EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

Viewed in stages, the period immediately before and after actual desegregation was one of focus upon the process of change, of analysis of the effects of change, of viewing with alarm by some and of drum-thumping acclamations of joy by others. The second distinct phase occurred after the first year of adjustment, when the satisfaction of having accomplished an unprecedented reorganization gave way to a more realistic look at the educational problems which, for the first time, became fully known and the concern of all the citizens.

The third stage in the history of desegregation began in the third year, when the superintendent and the Board of Education with the help of the press, directed attention to a more intelligent and reasoned analysis of the problem as an educational one and pursued with increased vigor a campaign for improvement in educational facilities and practices.

## The Big Fear

The most common and persistent fear of the parents about the effect of integration was that it would lower the standard of education for all children.

When the results of the first city-wide achievement tests began to reach the newspapers in 1955, this fear seemed to have been justified, for these tests showed that achievement medians were considerably below national standards.

When this information, without adequate evaluation, hit the press, a widespread reaction was, "This is the result of integration. If Negro and white students attend the same school, the white students, too, will be held back."

The big fear, it seemed, was now in fact being justified. The reactions were quite naturally often acrimonious and sometimes even opportunistic, but for the most part the public attitude was, "Let's work on this condition as an educational problem."

Fortunately for the school system, this was the point of view taken by the organized parents of the community, who demanded better fiscal support for more teachers in order to reduce class size and to set up special classes for retarded pupils.

## The Big Problem

If the schools are prepared to teach children according to their needs and abilities, no child will lose because some or even large numbers of pupils are academically retarded. If the schools are organized to teach according to this philosophy, the gifted, the average, and the slow will learn at the rate of which they are capable.

Actually, any school system, unless it is selective and can set up entrance requirements, must organize to educate children of varying abilities and backgrounds. Most educators have already discovered the high correlation between what the student needs in the classroom and his cultural and economic status. The characteristic of the problem in big cities is that the underprivileged families cluster in the central areas, creating for most urban schools an atypical distribution of slow, average, and bright children.

When confronted with this set of facts, some individuals and groups attacked the public schools, blamed the philosophy or methodology of teaching, criticized the teachers themselves for indifference or lack of skill, and attributed this condition to the fact of integration.

With reference to the teacher situation, some expressed the view directly or by implication that Negro teachers are inferior. There is no evidence for this view; actually, considering the extent of cultural deprivation of many Negro children and the limited amount of cultural diffusion that was possible under a system of school segregation, the teachers of Negro children have done on the whole a magnificent and dedicated teaching job.

In the cultural Siberia in which many Negro children live, they acquire too little that is educationally helpful before they come to school and as a result teachers must supply many of the experiences and learnings which children should get as a matter of course in home and family life. The wonder is, then, that so many of the Negro children who have had so little in their homes have gained so much in school.

Evaluation of success in teaching, then, must be done in relation to the conditions under which that teaching takes place. Only if that is done, can the role of the Negro teachers in presegregation Washington, D. C., be validly measured. Their contribution to the education of children, when measured in terms of their social and academic progress, will, it is predicted, be found praiseworthy. Any teacher, Negro or white, knows that improvement is generally slow when children come from unstable homes, when their experiences are limited and impoverished, and their motivations do not conform to middle-class values.

Desegregation does not provide a miraculous solution to deprivation. If it is believed that by mixing faculties and children the present retardation of many children will automatically and promptly disappear, this false hope will lead to disappointment. Cultural change is a slow process; for some, major improvement never occurs. Improvements will take place as a result of the unified attack upon the problem. But the overall average retardation in skill subjects will persist in most urban centers because of disabling socio-economic conditions.

## The Big Solution

The superintendent and the Board of Education are well on the way to the realization of their primary objective: the maximum development of every pupil, regardless of race, creed, cultural and economic status, and supposed capacity for learning.

The concentration of effort upon this fundamental objective is now possible because the obstructive effect of school segregation has been removed, and the first distractive stages of desegregation have been passed. The entire community is united in an all-out effort to improve public education in the District schools.

The superintendent's school improvement program is broad and quite inclusive:

1. Curriculum reorganization already completed has resulted in an increase in homogeneous grouping at all levels, in order to reduce the range of differences in classes. This includes a new four-sequence curriculum for the senior high schools, under which are provided an honors curriculum for gifted students, regular college preparatory and general curriculums, and a basic curriculum for the students who need additional instruction in the fundamental skills.
2. A reemphasis upon the skills program at all levels has been officially required, along with a re-examination of promotional practices.
3. An increase of emphasis upon subject matter standards has followed, particularly in those fields and groupings where pupils can be expected to meet minimum requirements.
4. An increase in special education is taking place in order to

provide for the atypical slow learner and the educationally and emotionally handicapped.

In 1954, the elementary schools had 832 pupils in classes for atypicals.

In 1956, the number was 1339, an increase in provision for subnormals made possible by the acquisition of additional teachers through Congressional appropriations.

In the junior high schools, the increase was even greater, with 1486 pupils in special classes for slow learners in 1954 and 2653 in such classes in 1956.

5. A concerted drive to reduce the size of regular classes in the elementary schools is continuing. With united community effort and Congressional support, significant gains have been made, although additional steps must be taken to reach the goal of a ratio of 30 pupils to each teacher in grades one to six. In 1954, the elementary school ratio was 35.6 whereas in 1956 it was reduced to 34.8. The goal for 1957 is a reduction to 32 to one.
6. An extensive building program to provide school rooms for an increasing and shifting school population and to provide improved facilities in vocational and occupational education is under consideration. Additional classroom facilities will be needed at a stepped-up rate to provide for reduction in class size and population gains in outlying areas.

*SUMMARY:* The big fear, that integration will impair the education of some children in the community, is rapidly yielding to the concentrated drive to effectuate the big solution. The prevailing spirit in the District of Columbia is positive and dynamic. It looks forward to a growing and improving school system, to a betterment of educational opportunities for all children, and is resolved to let no transient troubles prevent the realization of the ultimate goal, a better community through brotherhood.